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Time and Human Nature:

A Modest Defense of Eternalism

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Time and Human Nature:

A Modest Defense of Eternalism

by

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To the Glory of God

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Time and Human Nature:

A Modest Defense Of Eternalism

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Eternalism is the view that all times are real and no time is objectively past, present or future. It is commonly assumed that eternalism creates problems for robust conceptions of human nature, since the freedom, responsibility and rationality that such conceptions typically require seem for various reasons to demand a metaphysical distinction between the present and other times. My purpose is to show, to the contrary, that eternalism is fully compatible with freedom, responsibility and rationality, thereby laying the essential groundwork for a positive defense of

eternalism as the correct theory of time. My project has a number of important ramifications, not the least of which is that it points the way towards a satisfying integration of the best scientific, theological, and humane learning.

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1. Introduction

> It is clearly bad for the sciences and the arts to be divided into "two cultures." It is bad for scientists to be working without a sense of obligation to cultural tradition. It is bad for artists and scholars in the humanities to be working without a sense of obligation to the world beyond artifacts of culture. It is bad for both of these cultures to be operating… [without] any vision of an eternal order to which we all are subordinate and under obligation.
>
> – Wendell Berry, *Life is a Miracle*

1.1 Of Time and Human Nature

The present essay is an exercise in what might be called "analytic humanism." It employs the distinctive methods and commitments of contemporary analytic philosophy – conceptual analysis, attention to logical form, confidence in empirical science, a problem-centered approach, a sturdy suspicion of unfettered speculation – to explore one aspect of that great and ancient question: What is man? Influential strands of the Western tradition, which can be grouped under the heading "humanism," have answered that human beings are fundamentally distinguished from the rest of the natural world in virtue of possessing a conspicuous moral nature. Though humanism in its various forms was once dominant, it has now fallen into disrepute in many sectors. My project arises from the conviction that at least a limited humanism is nevertheless true.

A full-scale vindication of the unique importance of human persons is beyond the scope of a single essay.[1] In fact, I shall not even try to defend it. Instead, I shall consider human nature in connection with another ancient question: What is the nature of time? Some of the most significant challenges to a traditional understanding of

[1] In this essay I use the locution "human persons," which I sometimes abbreviate as "persons." I do not take a position here on whether there are humans that are not persons or persons that are not humans.

persons are due to dramatic developments in modern science, most notably the Copernican revolution in astronomy and the advent of evolutionary biology. A third challenge, less widely noted but, in my judgment, no less important, is due to a certain view of time – call it "eternalism" – according to which all past, present and future times are fully real and on an ontological par with one another. Eternalism – also known variously as the block universe theory, the tenseless theory and the B-theory of time – strikes many as deeply counter-intuitive, in part because it can seem to imply that the moving present, however deeply engrained in our experience, is actually an illusion. Eternalism has a venerable pedigree in the history of philosophy, arguably beginning with Parmenides, but has received a fresh impetus in the last century with the emergence of relativity theory. Consequently, while there exist non-scientific motivations for eternalism, it is not surprising that it is the most popular theory of time among philosophers most enamored of the achievements of modern science.[2]

It is commonly assumed that eternalism creates problems for human nature, at least as traditionally conceived, since the freedom, responsibility and rationality that such a conception requires seem for various reasons to demand an objective distinction between the present and other times. Accordingly, eternalists typically propose deep revisions to the traditional understanding. After all, they point out, we are by now quite accustomed to the modern worldview's displacement of old dogmas. Conversely, philosophers less impressed with modernity tend to impute a certain hubris to eternalists. Either the theory is not implied by science at all, it is suggested, or science

[2] For example, Bertrand Russell, Hans Reichenbach, W.V.O. Quine, J.J.C. Smart and Adolf Grünbaum.

is inadequate to the exigencies of human nature. Defenders of what I call "temporalism," the family of theories committed to a real moving present, are frequently motivated by concerns about responsible agency.[3] Indeed, though seldom portrayed in such terms, the controversy over eternalism can fruitfully be viewed as a conflict between advocates of a scientific vision of reality on the one hand and advocates of a humane vision on the other.

Incidentally, it is also possible to frame the controversy in theological terms. The doctrines of divine simplicity, foreknowledge and creation *ex nihilo* seem to require divine timelessness, which in turn seems to imply eternalism. The problem is that most theists also wish to maintain a robust view of persons, regarding them as free, responsible and rational in a very strong sense. After all, the standard reply to the problem of evil appeals to free will, the doctrines of judgment and immortality presuppose responsibility over time, and the doctrines of divine providence and benevolence suggest that our rational faculties should be generally reliable. Since each of these conclusions seems contradicted by the implications of eternalism and thus of divine timelessness, the traditional theistic picture is threatened with incoherence. Consequently, a parallel debate has occurred in philosophical theology, with some theists rejecting divine timelessness and others endorsing revisions of traditional claims about persons.

However the debate is construed, my purpose is to demonstrate that it involves a false dilemma, arising from a cluster of misunderstandings about what eternalism

[3] For example, Henri Bergson, A.N. Prior, Peter Geach and William Lane Craig.

implies. As I shall show, eternalism is fully compatible with very strong conceptions of freedom, responsibility and rationality. Inasmuch as virtually no philosopher of time accepts this position, it is a conclusion of some significance. Moreover, inasmuch as every important objection to eternalism is motivated by considerations about the nature and experience of personhood, my conclusion can form the core of a positive case for eternalism. The overarching purpose of this essay, then, is to defend eternalism negatively against challenges related to human nature and thereby to lay the groundwork for a positive defense of eternalism as the correct theory of time.

1.2 The Compatibility Thesis

Before turning to the arguments, three preliminary tasks remain. In this section I shall state with more precision what the central contention of the present essay is. In the following section I shall state with more precision what eternalism is and what the alternatives to it are. In the concluding section I shall lay out my basic working assumptions and outline my strategy for defending my position.

As indicated above, it has seemed to some that an adequate account of human nature must affirm the freedom, responsibility and rationality of persons, but these qualities, unfortunately, appear to create problems for eternalism, at least if they are conceived in certain robust ways. Later chapters will of course explore each problem in detail, but getting an initial fix on them here will afford an opportunity to clarify what I aim to show with respect to them. Perhaps the most obvious difficulty is that eternalism appears to rule out free will. For if an agent is free, it would seem that his

choice between multiple courses of action on a given occasion must originate with him. Eternalism, however, implies that the outcomes of an agent's decisions are always settled in advance. How, then, can they be up to him? The next issue is a little harder to see but is equally problematic. Since eternalism depicts the world as a four-dimensional manifold, this might suggest that people are also four-dimensional objects, with just a single temporal part occupying each moment of a person's existence. However, neither a whole four-dimensional object nor any of its three-dimensional parts seems a plausible candidate for attributions of responsibility across time, at least if such attributions are more than matters of convention. Does this not call the entire four-dimensional picture into question? Finally, perhaps the knottiest problems relate to the reliability of our rational faculties. First, human consciousness is pervaded by a palpable and inescapable sense of the movement of time, and yet eternalism seems to deny the reality of temporal passage. Does this make temporal experience a massive illusion? Second, the motivations for virtually all of our time-sensitive attitudes seem to rely crucially on judgments ascribing a privileged status to the present, but eternalism countenances no genuine distinctions among times. Could motivation be predicated on a colossal mistake?

These problems, individually and jointly, pose serious challenges to eternalism. Of course, one way to cope with them would be to adopt attenuated understandings of freedom, responsibility and rationality. There is no doubt something to be said for such a strategy, but my own approach requires that I find solutions elsewhere. As we will see, it is to the eternalist's distinct advantage to take the qualities in question as

controlling, assuming for the sake of argument the strongest plausible conceptions of freedom, responsibility and rationality on offer. These strong conceptions are reflected in what I shall call the *robust theory of persons*, which is the conjunction of three theses:

(FF) Human persons have *full freedom*, that is, they are sometimes the ultimate originators of choices between alternative possibilities.

(RR) Human persons have *real responsibility*, that is, they are sometimes the bearers of objective merit for their actions.

(RF) Human persons have *reliable rational faculties*, that is, they are not systematically misled about important features of the world.[4]

My task is to defend what I call the *compatibility thesis*, which is the claim that eternalism is fully compatible with the robust theory of persons. If there are good grounds, independent of the philosophy of time, for rejecting or qualifying (FF), (RR) or (RF), then so much the better for eternalism.

What do I mean by "fully compatible"? I do not mean merely that eternalism and the robust theory of persons are logically consistent, i.e. that their conjunction does not generate a logical contradiction. This would be interesting enough in itself, but we can do better. Rather, I shall show that the robust theory of persons, if true, would not impose on eternalism any greater "cost" than it would impose on alternative theories of time. Metaphysicians are acutely aware that embracing one position necessarily commits one to the denial of other positions, some of which may have

[4] An even more robust theory of persons could be formulated by adding other theses popular in the history of philosophy, e.g. that persons have immaterial souls, that they are immortal, etc. However, it is safe to ignore such theses, as none of them has been widely regarded as posing a challenge to eternalism.

much going for them. Indeed, one thing that makes metaphysical inquiry so vexing is that it so often pits our deeply held intuitions against each other. One quickly learns that every theory comes with a price; one nearly always winds up denying something that once seemed obvious. The main advantage of what I shall argue is that it shows that the eternalist can take on the robust theory of persons without any cost that would undermine his position. Eternalism naturally has certain costs, as we will see, as do (FF), (RR) and (RF). However, the conjunction of eternalism with any or all of these theses adds no *new* costs, or at least no new costs outweighing those involved in conjoining other theories of time with them.

A simple illustration will underscore my point. Consider the claim that a certain ordinary object – a teapot, say – is located in a certain location at a certain time. Now consider the claim that the teapot is in another location a trillion miles away one second later. These two claims are logically consistent; their conjunction does not yield any contradiction. However, now consider a third claim, one that happens to be widely accepted by those who make a career of thinking about such things: teapots cannot travel a trillion miles in a second. Taken together, these three claims form an inconsistent triad; any two of them might be true together, but all three cannot be. Given the credentials of the third claim, the conjunction of the first two becomes exceedingly implausible. One could affirm both without contradiction, but only at great cost, as they jointly entail the denial of a bit of physics that we have every reason to accept.

Similarly, it could be argued that the conjunction of eternalism with any or every component of the robust theory of persons, though not logically contradictory, involves unreasonable costs, either entailing or rendering likely problematic states of affairs. For instance, one might argue that the only way to resolve the tension between eternalism and (RR) is to accept a temporal analogue to counterpart theory, which would make it possible to hold one temporal part responsible for the actions of an earlier counterpart, even though the parts are numerically distinct – a proposal involving deep revisions to standards views of morality and identity. It could be argued that equally profound costs result from affirming eternalism together with (FF) or (RF). What I aim to show, however, is that arguments of this sort can be dispelled; the eternalist always has solutions available that avoid such drastic consequences. Therefore, not only is eternalism logically consistent with the robust theory of persons, but the two are easy to affirm together, at least if the issues involved are properly understood.

1.3 Eternalism and Temporalism

The status of the present moment has found special prominence in philosophical discussions of time in the last century and particularly the last two decades. A dizzying array of theories has been proposed to resolve the question, but the main fault line, as I have already indicated, lies between eternalists, who recognize no fundamental distinctions among times, and temporalists, who attach a singular metaphysical significance to the present time. Before defending the compatibility of eternalism with

the robust theory of persons, it will be useful to present the theory and its competitors in the clearest possible light. This section is thus purely descriptive, specifying the points at issue between eternalists and temporalists, and in the process developing a taxonomy of theories of time. The discussion will have the added benefit of introducing many key terms used throughout this essay.

I define *eternalism* as the conjunction of two theses:

(E1) Every past, present and future time exists.

(E2) No time is objectively present.[5]

Let me note first that a *time*, as I use the term, is a hyperplane of simultaneity dividing a real or imaginary timeline. In Chapter 3, I shall relax this definition by suggesting that times can have a "thickness", and in the last chapter I shall have to add that simultaneity is relative to a reference frame, but for the moment, and through nearly all of this essay, no harm will come of conceiving times in the terms just given. In fact, whatever intuitive concept is ordinarily associated with expressions like "times," "moments" and "instants" should do duty for my purposes, unless otherwise specified. I should also mention that when I mention various times, what I say about them generally applies equally to any objects or events located at those times. Indeed, if the relational view of time is true, then a time is nothing over and above its constituents, anyway. However, I take no position on the question whether time is relational or substantival. My language in this essay may by turns suggest a relational conception of time or a substantival conception, depending on what best facilitates exposition, but no

[5] Equivalent definitions of the theory are offered by Sider (2001: 14) and Crisp (2003: 218-219).

commitment to either view is intended, as nothing I have to say rides on the distinction between them.

One way to get an intuitive feel for the picture of reality jointly implied by (E1) and (E2) is to try to imagine viewing the world from a "God's eye" or maximally objective point of view. What would one see? According to (E1) and (E2), one would see every time that ever has existed or ever will exist, every object that ever has existed or ever will exist at a time, and every event that ever has occurred or ever will occur at a time, all laid out in a row, as it were. Moreover, no time, object or event would stand out as uniquely present; no "bright red line" would be seen moving along the timeline. Every time, object and event would have the same status as every other time, object or event of its kind, the only objective temporal differences among them being differences of position in the temporal order. For the eternalist, the world consists solely of timelessly obtaining states of affairs. The theory therefore lends itself to representing the timeline as a vast, connected, static series of moments, each of whose members and its contents is real and ontologically undistinguished from the others: the so-called "block universe."

This picture gives us a start, but it will be instructive to examine each thesis more carefully. It is important to emphasize that (E1) employs a tenseless verb, and thus does not assert the incoherent claim that the past and future exist *now*. Eternalists view the world as fully describable using Quinean "eternal sentences,"[6] which avoid commitment to any temporal perspective by employing tenseless predicates. (E1) is

[6] See e.g., Quine (1981: 26).

asserting something about the class of things that timelessly exist, namely, that it includes not only the time that happens to be present, but also all times prior to and subsequent to this time. Thomas Crisp illuminates (E1) when he writes that eternalists subscribe to "the thesis that our most inclusive domain of quantification includes [all] entities at a non-zero temporal distance from one another."[7] (E1) thus entails that dinosaurs belong to this domain, as do George Washington, the winners of all future Super Bowls, and the original and (if there is one) the final state of the universe. Furthermore, the timelessness of the eternalist's most inclusive domain guarantees that its contents do not vary from one moment to the next. At every time, every member of the most inclusive domain of every prior and subsequent time belongs to the most inclusive domain of that time. This implies that the ordinary constituents of past and future times are not abstract or ethereal, but are of just the same sort as the ordinary constituents of the present time. In short, (E1) stakes out a thoroughgoing realism about past and future times and their constituents.

Before examining (E2), let me start constructing my taxonomy of theories by pointing out the varieties of temporalism that deny (E1). Let us say that *temporal anti-realism* is the view that one or more parts of the eternalist's timeline are absent from our most inclusive domain of quantification at any given moment. That is, temporal anti-realists deny the reality of a concrete past or a concrete future or both. There are two forms of temporal anti-realism, presentism and the growing block theory.

[7] Crisp (2003: 218).

Presentists deny the reality of both past and future, maintaining that only the present time and its constituents belong to our most inclusive domain of quantification. Natural language is, of course, pervaded by apparent references to past and future, but presentists account for these by claiming that their semantic values are what we may call, following David Lewis's usage in another connection,[8] "ersatz times," that is, ontologically unobjectionable substitutes for concrete past and future times. The presentist regards concrete past and future times as convenient fictions that can be safely excluded from our ontology.

Two versions of presentism can be distinguished on the basis of what they propose as stand-ins for non-present times. *Abstract presentism*, the dominant version of this theory, is the view that apparent references to past and future times are really references to abstract representations of such times. This approach is thus analogous to the actualist, as opposed to the possibilist, view of possible worlds.[9] *Deflationist presentism*, on the other hand, eschews reference even to abstracta, appealing instead to presently existing concrete objects. Apparent references to past and future times are interpreted as references to presently existing evidences and dispositions, respectively, so that talk of dinosaurs, for instance, is really talk of fossils and talk of future sunrises is really talk of the current trajectories of the earth and sun.[10]

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[8] Cf. Lewis (1986).
[9] Prior seems to have originated abstract presentism (see Prior 2003b and 2003c), though he leaves it to later interpreters to develop it in detail. William Lane Craig works out the theory in Craig (2000).
[10] This view is due to Peter Ludlow (1999, esp. 157-163), though it also seems to receive passing mention in Michael Tooley (1997: 39).

Presentists are not the only ones who deny (E1). *Growing block theorists* are anti-realists about the future but realists about the present and past. Their theory depicts the world's timeline as constantly growing, with each new moment adding to its extent. Thus, at a given moment, our most inclusive domain of quantification includes everything that the most inclusive domain of the previous moment includes, plus one more time and its constituents. Growing block theorists have not always commented on what the semantic values of references to the future are, but they could easily borrow the ersatzist strategy, interpreting these as references to abstract times or dispositions existing in the present or past, while taking references to the present and past as quantifying over concrete objects.[11]

Returning to eternalism, (E1) asserts that the whole timeline timelessly exists, but it says nothing (at least directly) about the status of times on the timeline. Claim (E2) clarifies this matter, asserting that there is no real temporal property corresponding to "now" or equivalent expressions – nor, for that matter, is there real pastness or futurity, inasmuch as these would be definable in relation to real presentness. (E2) implies that not even an omniscient God would know which time is *really* present, any more than he would know which object is *really* to the left. For the eternalist, predications of presentness are always relative. Thus, while I might truly say, "it is now snowing," the occurrence of the event mentioned is not objectively present, i.e. present independently of any perspective, but merely present relative to

[11] The growing block theory originates with C.D. Broad (see Broad 1938). Tooley's view is sometimes described as a growing block theory, and he himself acknowledges a debt to Broad, but it will soon become clear that his theory is really a qualified form of temporal realism. Zeilicovi (1989) defends something closer to Broad's view.

the time that the sentence is uttered.[12] The point can be generalized from temporal indexicals to adjectival and adverbial phrases such as "recent," "currently," and "six weeks from now," to noun phrases such as "times gone by" and "tomorrow's race," and to all tensed verbs, inasmuch as standards uses of all such expressions have an indexical character.

Some background will shed more light on the issue of temporal predication. Eternalists are often called "B-theorists," thanks to a useful distinction drawn by J.M.E. McTaggart in his seminal paper, "The Unreality of Time."[13] McTaggart distinguishes two ways of ordering temporal positions reflected in everyday thinking. "As time appears to us *prima facie*," he writes, each position on the timeline

> is Earlier than some, and Later than some, of the other positions. And each position is either Past, Present, or Future…For the sake of brevity I shall speak of the series of positions running from the far past through the near past to the present, and then from the present to the near future and the far future, as the A series. The series of positions which runs from earlier to later I shall call the B series.[14]

According to McTaggart, the *A-series* comprises past, present and future times, while the *B-series* comprises earlier-than, later-than, and simultaneous times. It may sound strange to distinguish two distinct series, when we commonly apply determinations from both series to the same events, but McTaggart's analysis does not rule out the possibility that these series are identical. (His own conclusion, as explained in the next

[12] I have obscured the difference between the leading eternalist analyses of temporal indexicals, the date-analysis theory and the token-reflexive theory. I shall say more about temporal language in Chapter 5.
[13] J.M.E. McTaggart (1908). He develops the arguments from this article in slightly more detail in chapter 33 of McTaggart (1927).
[14] McTaggart (1908: 456-457).

section, is that they are identical and nonexistent.) The distinction between the A-series and the B-series has proven to be of great utility to the philosophy of time, which now commonly recognizes a distinction between "A-terms," generally expressing speaker-independent properties of pastness, presentness and futurity (or relations to times having such properties), and "B-terms," expressing speaker-relative relations. It also recognizes A-language and B-language, A-beliefs and B-beliefs, A-properties and B-relations, A-facts and B-facts, and so forth. Philosophers of time tend to style themselves either *A-theorists* (temporalists), who view the A-series as fundamental, or *B-theorists* (eternalists), who view the B-series as fundamental. Presentists hold that the B-series is reducible to the A-series, while most other temporalists claim that the A-series and the B-series are both fundamental and mutually irreducible. Eternalists claim that the A-series is reducible to the B-series, since, in keeping with (E2), they deny the existence of A-properties and A-facts. For them, only the B-series exists in reality.

Given eternalism's reducibility thesis, it should be clear that my free use of A-language throughout this essay – for instance, in my statement of eternalism in (E1) and (E2) – should not be taken to imply any commitment to objective presentness. The "present," as I use it when writing in my own voice (as opposed to writing on behalf of my temporalist opponents), is simply the time of writing, the "past" consists of times prior to the time of writing, and the "future" consists of times subsequent to the time of writing. My free use of temporal indexicals, tensed verbs and other instances of A-language is in keeping with my general conviction that temporalists should not be

ceded the linguistic high ground, as if A-language suggested anything as strong as the A-theory. In Chapter 5, I shall give some reasons to think that natural language favors neither temporalism nor eternalism. Nevertheless, when context does not eliminate the possibility of confusion, I shall specify the sense in which a given A-expression is to be understood.

We have seen that temporalists disagree with one another over (E1). Every variety of temporalism, however, affirms

(T) The present is objectively present.

which is of course just the denial of (E2). In other words, all temporalists are agreed that the present moment is present regardless of whether any subject recognizes it as such. Presentness is an objective property. (Let me add here that throughout this essay I use "property" in the broad sense that includes both monadic properties proper and polyadic relations; the salient point here is the objectivity of the property, not its adicity.) In A.N. Prior's phrase, temporalists "take tense seriously," that is to say, they build into their ontology the distinction between the present and other times that is apparently marked in tensed discourse. (T) is of particular importance for proponents of what I call *temporal realism*, since it is the primary claim separating their view from eternalism. Unlike anti-realists, temporal realists do not deny the existence of parts of the eternalist's timeline. They affirm (E1) but deny (E2), agreeing with eternalists that past, present and future exist but contending that their status *as* past, present and future is objective.

The most well-known variety of temporal realism is the *moving spotlight theory*, so called because it pictures the timeline as a vast series of moments, with the present moving along like a spotlight from one moment to the next. One version of this theory, *property temporalism*, holds that presentness is a primitive, intrinsic property that instantaneously inheres in each moment just as it is slipping from the future into the past. On this view, each moment is otherwise temporally alike, but is momentarily "highlighted" as it acquires the property of presentness.[15]

Another version of the moving spotlight theory, *existence temporalism*, claims that a moment that becomes present does not acquire a property of presentness but rather the possession of full reality. One form of this proposal distinguishes various degrees of existence. The farther away from the present a moment is, the less real it is, and when a time is present, it is maximally real.[16] Another form distinguishes between actuality at a time and actuality *simpliciter*. The past and present are actual at the present time and actual *simpliciter*, whereas the future is only actual *simpliciter*. Both views deny full reality to certain points on the timeline.[17]

While moving spotlight theorists affirm a unique future and a unique past, the other type of temporal realism, the *shrinking tree theory*, depicts the universe as a unique past together with a network of possible futures that becomes less complex as

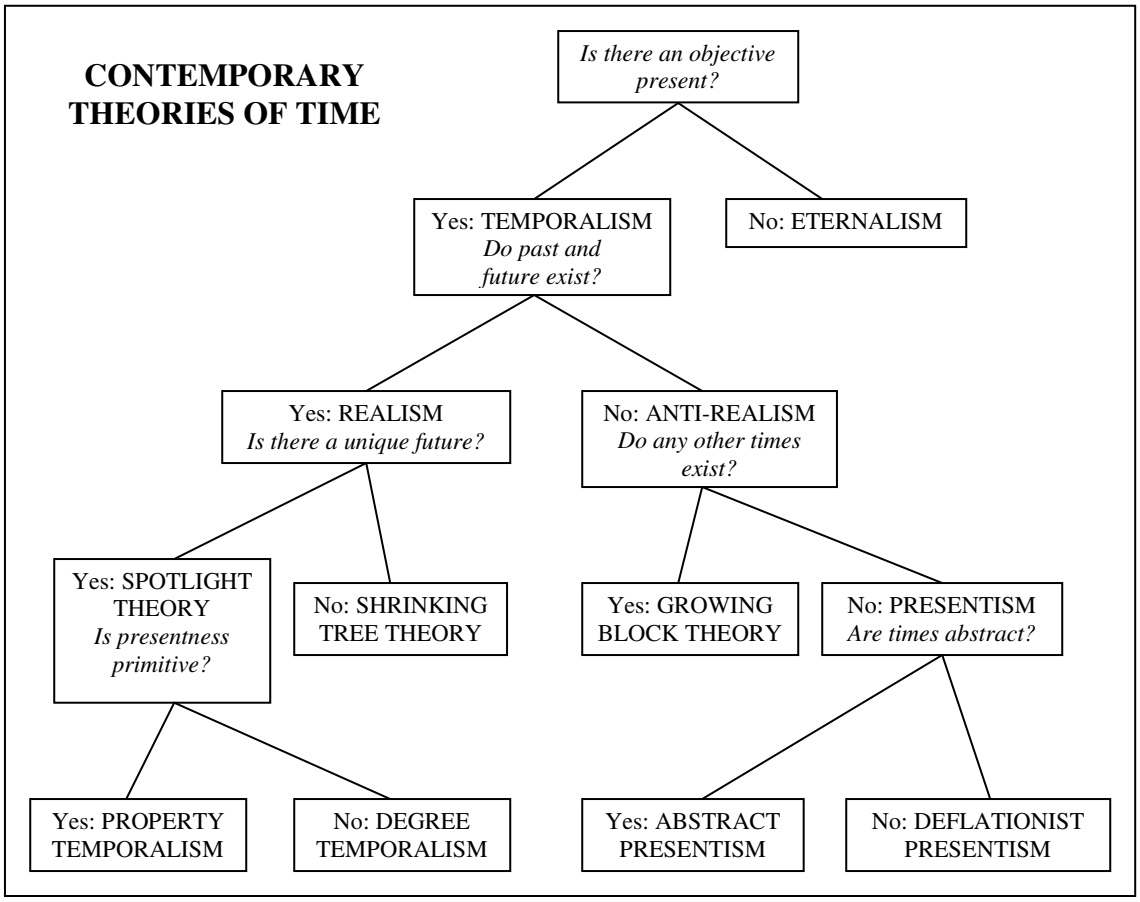
[15] Smith (1993) endorses this view.
[16] This view is due to Smith (2002). Smith calls the theory "degree presentism." This is inapt, since the theory has more in common with realist varieties of temporalism than with anti-realist ones, in virtue of its quantification over concrete past and future times.
[17] This view is due to Tooley (1997). Tooley explicitly connects actuality and existence.

possibilities are actualized over time.[18] Though the shrinking tree theory embodies a kind of realism about past and future, it also has affinities with the growing block theory, inasmuch as both theories view the contents of the timeline as changing from moment to moment. These two theories can thus be grouped together as *dynamic timeline theories*.

Interestingly, (E1) and (E2) seem to be mutually entailing, at least given plausible ancillary assumptions. If times include things and things include property instantiations, then the timeless verb in (E1) implies that there is no property of presentness, since objective presentness cannot be timelessly predicated. Conversely, if past times did exist and future times will exist, then (E2) implies that they exist timelessly, since without an objective present, all predication is timeless. Despite this virtual equivalence, I distinguish the theses for two reasons. First, they help us to understand temporalism, because, while temporalists are united in their denial of (E2), they are divided over (E1), with some quantifying over past and future times and others preferring a more restrictive ontology. Second, the two theses figure into different criticisms of eternalism, with (FF) and (RR) creating apparent problems for (E1), and (RF) creating apparent problems for (E2). A sound defense of eternalism must therefore defend each claim separately.

[18] This is the view of McCall (1976).

The following diagram represents the relationship between the two varieties of presentism, the two varieties of moving spotlight theory, the two dynamic timeline theories, and eternalism[19]:



[19] In addition to the six classes of theories I have sketched, other theories are conceptually possible, if far-fetched. For instance, one might hold that past and future times can be quantified over, but only with past-tense and future-tense quantifiers, respectively: a time could be said to exist, to have existed, or to be going to exist, but there would be no single concept of existence that captures all three modes. Or one might be a nihilist about the past and future, claiming that our belief in them is founded wholly on illusion. Rather than finding some substitute to take the place of the past and future in our ontology, such a theory would follow the solipsist's strategy of relegating them entirely to the world of fantasy. Or one might treat the past and future in the way that conceptualists treat universals, as existing in the mind. One might be a shrinking block theorist, with the timeline shrinking with every passing moment, or a growing tree theorist, with possible paths to the present being added with every passing moment. One might be a realist about only some past and future times, claiming that every even numbered calendar year from 1066 through 2524 exists, but that no other time does. One could also try to find a way to affirm either (E1) or (E2) in isolation. And so on. As interesting as it is to think about such theories, it is, needless to say, hard to imagine possible motivations for them.

The variety of temporalist theories is striking, especially in contrast to the single form of eternalism represented here.

Let me close this section by explaining why I choose the name "eternalism" for the theory rather than others in common use, such as the "block universe theory," "tenseless theory," "Parmenidean theory," "B-theory" or "new theory" of time. I do not use "block universe theory" to refer to the view I am defending, because this name overstates the analogy between space and time. I shall argue in various places, especially Chapter 3, that they are importantly different. I do not use "Parmenidean theory," because Parmenides believed temporal passage to be an illusion, which I shall deny in Chapter 4. I do not use "tenseless theory," because it gives undue importance to the role of language in this dispute. I do not use "B-theory," because, not only is it completely uninformative, but is also makes it sound as if the A-theory were the default view and that the B-theory were somehow novel or derivative. I have already pointed out that eternalism has a long pedigree in the history of philosophy, and I shall suggest in Chapter 5 that it finds some support in natural language and ordinary intuition. I do not use "new theory" because no view assumed by Boethius can be called new in the 21st century. "Eternalism" suggests just what I want it to suggest: that it is meaningful to speak of an eternal perspective on the world, and that every fact about the world is expressible in eternal sentences. Since the philosophy of time is already in terminological chaos, I see no harm in yet another stipulation.

1.4 Assumptions and Strategy

Finally, a few words about my basic working assumptions are in order. First, in this essay I assume that the benefit of the doubt should be given to what I call our *received conceptual framework*, the complex of moral, psychological, metaphysical and other fundamental beliefs and commitments that informs how most of us interact with others and navigate our environment, e.g. the belief in other minds, composite objects, persistence through change, cause and effect, and so on. In my view, the best approach to metaphysical questions is not to build from the ground up, as it were, but to take as starting points the commitments we already have, especially those most deeply embedded in our received framework. Thus I depart from those who treat every belief as guilty until proven innocent, as having no claim upon us until a positive justification is adduced. When faced with a choice between competing claims, I hold that it is most reasonable, all else being equal, to give priority to those that are most basic to our received framework.

I hasten to add that my view is not a species of either ordinary language philosophy or some analogous "ordinary intuition" philosophy. There are any number of real philosophical puzzles that do not stem from applying linguistic idioms or ordinary intuitions in contexts alien to those in which they originated. Though our ordinary beliefs are owed a certain amount of deference, in my view, the issues addressed in this essay nevertheless demand philosophical, and not just linguistic or psychological, analysis. Furthermore, I do not think that philosophical disputes are normally resolvable through simple appeals to our everyday beliefs, not only because

such beliefs are quite fallible, though they are that, but also because they underdetermine the answers to many pressing philosophical problems, not least of which is the status of the present moment. With the exceptions of (FF), (RR) and (RF) – which may or may not correspond to our ordinary conceptions of freedom, responsibility and rationality – I do not treat any particular component of our received conceptual framework as controlling. Rather, my view is simply that our received framework, having survived the tribunal of collective experience, should serve as a significant but defeasible constraint on our theorizing. Call this a commitment to *conceptual conservatism*.

A related assumption, which is really a counterpart to the first, is that a well-established theory – philosophical, scientific, or otherwise – ought to be given the benefit of the doubt, and that the more fruitful a received theory has proven to be, the greater the weight we should accord it. My view, again, is that there is little point in building from the ground up when there are workable theories on offer. Instead, I claim that our theorizing should start with the complexes of claims that philosophers, scientists and other theorists have found most useful in navigating the world of ideas. The best theories typically combine simplicity and other virtues with a high degree of explanatory power, and are marked by a continuing ability to assimilate less comprehensive theories, accommodate new data, and generate productive research programs. None of this is to say that even very good theories cannot be revised, taken in unexpected directions, or totally supplanted by superior theories: the overthrow of Newtonian physics is a case in point. Indeed, if an established scheme could not

justifiably be altered, there would be no point in doing original philosophy at all. Rather, my position is that, as in the case of our received conceptual framework – which is itself an enormously well-established and fruitful body of ideas, though a pre-theoretical one – a received theory should be treated as a significant but defeasible constraint on new theorizing. Call this a commitment to *theoretical conservatism*.

In addition to the two largely methodological commitments just outlined, there is also a substantive thesis that I shall not question in these pages, namely, the claim that time is real. I mention this because one way to dissipate the compatibility problem would be to deny the reality of time altogether, a position that is not unprecedented. McTaggart, in keeping with the tradition of British idealism to which he was both heir and benefactor, famously developed the following argument against the reality of time: time necessarily involves change; change requires the A-series; the A-series determinations of pastness, presentness and futurity are incompatible; attempts to resolve the incompatibility appeal to relations to times; but time necessarily involves change, which brings us full circle; with a regress threatening, we must conclude that time is unreal.[20] McTaggart's full argument is widely regarded as discredited, owing in part to tendentious assumptions about the concept of change, though the argument does have at least one sophisticated defender.[21] Others have jettisoned the first part of the argument and reformulated it as a B-theoretical argument against the reality of the A-series.[22] Since it would take us too far afield to do McTaggart's full argument

[20] See McTaggart (1908).
[21] Dummett (1960).
[22] Mellor (1998: 70-83); Oaklander (2002).

justice, I shall simply record my opinion that, McTaggart notwithstanding, time is real – an opinion, by the way, that is thoroughly in keeping with our everyday beliefs and with our leading philosophical and scientific theories.

My commitments to conceptual conservatism, theoretical conservatism and the reality of time are not, of course, unassailable. Like anything in philosophy, these can be controverted, perhaps ably. Since I am not at leisure to offer a sustained defense of my commitments, I can only note that, in my view, the problems considered in the present essay are not best solved by discarding them. However, lest it be suspected that I am stacking the deck in favor of my own argument, let me point out that my commitments, especially the first two, cut both ways. That is, while they inform my criticisms of temporalism and competing versions of eternalism, they also impose limits on my own theorizing. As explained in Section 1.2, my whole strategy for defending eternalism is to show that it can be conjoined with the robust theory of persons without substantial theoretical cost. Given the deference to everyday beliefs and established theory that I have expressed, it is incumbent on me to show that my own position does not incur the costs associated with unwarranted revisions of either of these.

The present essay touches on the philosophy of language, philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, epistemology and ethics, but ultimately it is a work of metaphysics. I shall advance tentative solutions to a number of thorny metaphysical problems, such as the problem of freedom and foreknowledge, the problem of temporary intrinsics and the problem of the essential indexical. (I call these solutions

"tentative" because they presuppose the robust theory of persons. Without this presumption, other solutions become available.) Through it all, my primary stalking horse is the metaphysics of persons as it bears on the nature of time, especially the respective statuses of the past, present and future. I close this introduction with a chapter-by-chapter summary of how I intend to tackle the question.

In Chapter 2, I consider three versions of the argument from freedom, the most important of which takes its cue from Aristotle's problem of the sea battle. This objection trades on the claim that incompatibilist freedom demands alternative possibilities that are not forthcoming on the eternalist picture. I argue in reply that the objection rests on a confusion about the concept of inevitability, and that eternalism does not entail fatalism unless one already assumes fatalism. I also reply to two other versions of the argument from freedom, one appealing to the notion of ultimate responsibility and the other to the importance of change. Once again, I show that these rest on confusions.

In Chapter 3, I examine the claim that attributions of real responsibility generally require a person to be wholly present at each moment of his existence. I agree with those who claim that the competing theory of persistence, the doctrine of temporal parts, is in tension with real responsibility; in fact I develop an extended argument for this conclusion. However, I also argue that, contrary to what many assume, eternalism does not in fact imply or even suggest the doctrine of temporal parts. I consider objections to my claim that eternalism does not require temporal

parts, paying especially close attention to a widely discussed argument based on the problem of temporary intrinsics.

In Chapters 4 and 5, respectively, I consider two connected challenges arising from the claim that our rational faculties are reliable. First I consider the assertion that judgments of real presentness are inextricable from temporal experience. I rebut the idea that temporal experience disconfirms eternalism by developing an account of it that saves the appearances while avoiding a commitment to real presentness. I go on in the next chapter to consider the trickiest objection to eternalism, the contention that motivations for time-sensitive attitudes and actions cannot be accounted for without judgments of real presentness. I criticize several eternalist strategies for coping with the "thank goodness" objection and then develop two strategies of my own. One thing that emerges is a version of the "new" B-theory of time that is superior to others currently on offer. The most distinctive feature of my view, which I call the *experiential view* is the claim that experiences at times are constituents of belief objects or belief states.

Chapter 6 ties up loose ends. After reviewing major and minor objections to eternalism, I briefly sketch a strategy for converting the compatibility thesis into a positive argument for eternalism – an argument that is more convincing that others currently on offer. I close with a summary of my substantive conclusions, highlighting its points of continuity and discontinuity with other theories of time. The resulting picture shows that even very robust conceptions of freedom, responsibility and rationality can form an integral part of the eternalist picture of reality.

2. Freedom

> Dr. Philip Hillyer: The future is already there! It's irrevocable and cannot be changed.
> George Wells: Now that's the most important question to which I hope to find an answer: Can man control his destiny, can he change the shape of things to come?
> *–The Time Machine*

Perhaps the most obvious challenge to the compatibility thesis arises from the commonly held view that eternalism implies determinism. L. Nathan Oaklander notes that it is "common for defenders of the tensed theory to argue that the tenseless view is incompatible with human free will."[1] After all, if the future is "already there," so to speak, then how could there be more than one possible way for it to turn out? G.J. Whitrow expresses the thought nicely:

> [T]he concept of the block universe…is more naturally associated with determinism, since determinism implies that all events are unalterably fixed and that which we call the future is just as unalterable as that which we call the past.[2]

The eternalist's insistence on a fixed future thus seems inconsistent with a robust conception of human freedom, which would require that an agent be able to originate choices between multiple possibilities. Insofar as there are good grounds for maintaining such a conception of freedom – or even for holding that one's larger metaphysics should be capable of supporting it, just in case it turns out to be true – eternalism is in danger. However, I aim to show in this chapter that the various versions of what I call the "argument from freedom" are confused.

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[1] Oaklander (1998: 335). He gives J.R. Lucas, Niall Shanks, Palle Yourgrau and Steven Cahn as examples of people who advance this line of reasoning. See p. 352, notes 1 and 2.
[2] Whitrow (1980: 350).

2.1 The Basic Argument from Freedom

Let us start with a few concepts. It is generally agreed that a free action is one that is up to the agent in some important sense, though philosophers disagree sharply about what this sense is. Perhaps the most thorough contemporary analysis is provided by Robert Kane, who identifies two conditions that have historically been associated with the concept of freedom.[3] The first, which he calls *Alternative Possibilities* or *AP*, stipulates that an action is free only if the agent could do otherwise than he actually does. The second condition, *Ultimate Responsibility* or *UR*, stipulates that an action is free only if it originates with the agent rather than with something external to him.[4] *Libertarianism* is the view that agents are free and that freedom is incompatible with *determinism*, the view that every human choice is the effect of some prior cause. Kane and most other libertarians maintain that any adequate theory of freedom must satisfy both the AP and UR conditions, and that libertarianism is the only theory able to do so. In other words, libertarianism promises to deliver what is expressed by

> (FF) Human persons have *full freedom*, that is, they are sometimes the ultimate originators of choices between alternative possibilities.

which is an essential component of the robust theory of persons. *Hard determinists*, on the other hand, allow that freedom involves one or both of the conditions Kane describes, and they emphatically agree that freedom is incompatible with determinism, but they embrace determinism and deny that anyone is free at all. *Soft determinists* or *compatibilists* try to split the difference between the two perspectives by affirming

[3] I use the expression "freedom" instead of the more standard "free will" in order to sidestep the question of whether there is some faculty corresponding to the term "will."
[4] Kane (1998: 33-35).

both freedom and determinism but contending that these are not actually in conflict. As we will see, there seems a clear sense in which compatibilists can affirm AP, but they typically argue that an action can be up to an agent in the important sense even if UR is not satisfied. AP provides the main basis for arguments from freedom against eternalism, but UP will also come into the discussion at an important juncture. The conjunction of the two conditions will create a special, though not irresolvable, inconvenience for eternalism.[5]

The argument from freedom trades on the idea that the existence of alternative possibilities seems excluded by the first component of eternalism as defined in the first chapter:

(E1) Every past, present and future time exists.

For example, suppose I will have a choice at a certain time tomorrow about what to have for lunch. If I possess libertarian freedom, then more than one option will be open to me at the point of decision. If I can choose to have, say, tuna salad, then I can equally choose not to have tuna salad. The problem is that eternalism implies that whatever choices I will make in the future are in a real sense already settled in the present. One might even say that they have been determined in advance, which is precisely what the critic of eternalism is at pains to deny. For if it is now the case that I will choose tuna salad tomorrow, then there is now no chance that, when the time of decision rolls around, I will instead choose roast beef, or chicken noodle soup, or

[5] It should be noted that a theory of freedom can be made robust in ways not considered here, for instance, by positing agent causation or Sartrean anti-essentialism. With the exception of a potential condition considered briefly at the end of 2.2, I assume that I can safely ignore "robust-making" conditions other than AP and UR.

nothing at all – else it would not have been the case in the first place that I would choose the tuna salad. As we saw in Chapter 1, eternalism represents past, present and future as a single chain of events, a picture of reality that appears quite at odds with the "garden of forking paths" picture required by the AP condition of libertarianism.[6]

This line of reasoning takes its inspiration most notably from Aristotle's famous discussion of the sea battle in Chapter 9 of *De Interpretatione*, in which (at least on one reading) he pits the law of the excluded middle against the evident contingency of certain statements about the future. Aristotle seems to argue that since it is now possible either for there to be or for there not to be a sea battle tomorrow – a sea battle being as good a candidate as any for a contingent event – the statement "there will be a sea battle tomorrow" is now neither true nor false. He generalizes the point by suggesting that there is a class of statements – which philosophers today call "future contingents" – to which the law of the excluded middle does not apply: "Clearly, then, it is not necessary that of every affirmation and opposite negation one should be true and the other false."[7]

Aristotle does not address the nature of time in this passage, nor does he have the issue of freedom in view, except inasmuch as the occurrence of a sea battle depends of human choice. However, his point can easily be pressed into the service of an argument against eternalism, which is committed to the idea that statements about

[6] The image of a "garden of forking paths" seems to be due originally to a short story of the same name by the postmodern writer Jorge Luis Borges. The thought he seems to be trying to suggest is that multiple, seemingly incompatible possibilities can somehow be simultaneously realized, though in the analytic literature on free will the image is typically taken to represent the less radical view of libertarians that multiple but genuinely incompatible courses of action are equally open to an agent.
[7] Aristotle (1962).

the future are *not* exempt from the law of the excluded middle. According to eternalism, I may not happen to know at present whether or not a sea battle will occur tomorrow, but it is not as if the sentence "there will be a sea battle tomorrow" is neither true nor false. Far from it: eternalism takes this sentence, like every tensed sentence, to express a timeless state of affairs that obtains or fails to obtain independently of any temporal perspective. The problem is that if the sentence about the sea battle – or any sentence about the future – is already either true or false, then any state of affairs that would give it a different truth value simply will not obtain. The future is already going to turn out a certain way and no room is left for things to turn out otherwise.

These considerations can be distilled into a formal argument against my compatibility thesis. Let us say that a future state of affairs is *settled* if and only if it is now either true that it will obtain or true that it will not obtain. Let us also say that the future *holds* alternative possibilities if and only if, given how things stand at the present moment, there is now more than one set of states of affairs that could obtain in the future. Now consider the following intuitively appealing argument:

(1) If eternalism is true, then every future state of affairs is settled. (Premise)

(2) If every future state of affairs is settled, then the future holds no alternative possibilities. (Premise)

(3) If libertarianism is true, then the future holds some alternative possibilities. (Premise)

(4) Therefore, either eternalism is false or libertarianism is false, that is to say, the compatibility thesis is false. (From 1, 2 and 3)[8]

I call this the "basic argument from freedom," because other arguments pitting eternalism and freedom against each other add various modifications to the above line of reasoning but nevertheless follow the same basic pattern.

Before proceeding, I should make an important disclaimer. The reader will notice that the argument's premises and the definitions they employ are expressed using tensed verb forms and temporal adverbs, as are the other arguments and sub-arguments I shall consider in this chapter. This is by design. As I have already made clear, the eternalist should not hesitate to use A-language – it is tremendously useful, after all, which is why it is so pervasive in everyday speech. Obviously, my use of A-language should not be understood as expressing a temporalist metaphysics. I take such language to be neutral between temporalism, which treats it as expressive of objective temporal properties, and eternalism, which treats it as expressive only of relations to speakers.

The basic argument from freedom is deductively valid. What should we make of its premises? It might be tempting to try to sidestep the initial premise by borrowing a move employed in debates surrounding the closely related problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. The divine timelessness solution, due originally to Augustine and subsequently developed by Boethius, proposes that God knows my future choices but that, strictly speaking, he does not *fore*know them, as he exists

[8] Ganssle (1995) records a similar argument and offers a brief rebuttal. Unfortunately, while he ably points out that (2) can be denied consistently, he does not address any sophisticated reasons for holding (2).

outside of time and thus does not enter into relations of temporal priority. Therefore, while it may be accurate in a metaphorical sense to say, "God knows now what I will choose tomorrow," it is not because he literally knows *now*, in advance, that I will make the choice, but because he knows it timelessly. In a similar vein, the eternalist could try to argue that while it may be accurate in an extended sense to say, "what I will choose tomorrow is now settled," it is not because it is literally *now* the case, in advance, that I will make the choice, but because it is timelessly the case – tenseless statements about the future being true, but not "*fore*true." Perhaps, then, the eternalist should not assent to premise (1) at all, since its reliance on the word "now" suggests what he cannot countenance, that states of affairs obtain or fail to obtain at particular times.

Unfortunately, this strategy does not yield an adequate reply to the argument from freedom. Even granting the eternalist's basic point that states of affairs obtain or fail to obtain timelessly, it is nevertheless undeniable that the sentences we use to express them are uttered at times. If someone says now, "Max will choose tuna salad tomorrow," the timeless state of affairs the sentence expresses is expressed at a particular time, namely, the present one. The scrupulous eternalist might insist that the sentence, being tensed, is not true or false itself, but it is hard to escape the conclusion that it *expresses* something true or false at a time, since it is located at a time and it represents a state of affairs that does or does not timelessly obtain. In other words, even if the eternalist prefers not to characterize sentences as bearers of truth and falsehood, these can still succeed or fail in describing what happens at later times. This

is enough to create an obstacle for eternalism, since it means that one can still say without impropriety that, at any time, and for every state of affairs that is future with respect to that time, a sentence expressed at that time can truly describe the state of affair's obtaining or truly describe its not obtaining – which if different in form, but not in substance, from premise (1).

Incidentally, it has been suggested by Alvin Plantinga and others that considerations of the sort just raised point up an inadequacy in the divine timelessness solution to the foreknowledge problem: though God has timeless knowledge rather than foreknowledge of my choosing the tuna salad, it is observed, he also has timeless knowledge of the "forefact" that someone truly says or could say a day in advance of my choice that I timelessly choose the tuna salad. Thus the whole problem of foreknowledge reasserts itself at the level of facts.[9] However, while this criticism shows that an appeal to divine timelessness does not by itself solve the problem, it is hasty to conclude that such an appeal is not a viable strategy.[10] Rather, it only shows that further argumentation is required. If I succeed here in showing that the truth of claims about future states of affairs does not rule out their contingency, my analysis can be viewed as a supplement to the divine timelessness solution. Indeed, as will be seen, my strategy is basically Boethian in both inspiration and substance.

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[9] Plantinga (1986: 240). See also Zagzebski (1991: 44).

[10] Of course, this conclusion has borne much philosophical fruit, leading Plantinga and others to resurrect a strategy owing to Ockham and other scholastics that appeals to something called *necessity per accidens*, which is a kind of necessity that changes with the passage of time. As this is an essentially A-theoretical concept, it is not of direct relevance here, but see Fischer (1989), which collects several important articles on the subject.

Since the force of (1) is not due to the misapplication of a temporal indexical, I take it to be a simple consequence of (E1). The same goes for (3), which amounts to nothing more than the pedestrian observation that, according to libertarianism, the future could, given how things stand at present, turn out in more than one way. But what about premise (2)? Though I have tried above to capture some of what motivates the basic argument from freedom, attentive readers will notice that not much has yet been provided by way of reason for accepting this crucial premise. Of course, (2) presents itself with such force to many minds that they simply take it for granted. William Hasker writes that, "even apart from the inherent implausibility of the B-theory, it is quite evident that this theory is inherently fatalistic and thus inconsistent with the libertarian view of free will."[11] Regarding the supposed implausibility of eternalism, my claim is that it accords no better or worse with our intuitions than any other standard theory of time, whose nature is inescapably mystifying to the ordinary, not to mention the philosophical, mind. Of more interest is the confidence with which Hasker states his assumption about fatalism: in a book-length treatment of the relationship between time, freedom and theism, Hasker is satisfied to dismiss eternalism with a single sentence, on the basis of an apparent assumption that the settledness of the future excludes alternative possibilities. Is such confidence warranted?

[11] Hasker (1989: 128).

Aristotle affirms something like (2), and some suggest that he does so on the basis of a line of reasoning that takes the necessity of the law of the excluded middle, i.e.

N1 For all statements *s*, necessarily (*s* or not-*s*).

to imply the following rather surprising claim:

N2 For all statements *s*, (necessarily *s*) or (necessarily not-*s*).[12]

On this interpretation, Aristotle uses the example of the sea battle to show that since an important class of statements cannot with any plausibility be characterized as necessary truths or necessary falsehoods, it follows – given the inference from N1 to N2 – that any statements in this class are outside the domain of the law of the excluded middle. Unfortunately, as is routinely observed, the crucial inference is invalid: neither modal intuition nor any system of modal logic licenses reasoning from the highly plausible initial premise N1 to the incredible conclusion N2 that the particular way things turn out is a matter of necessity. I have no comment on whether the above inference is actually attributable to Aristotle.[13] I simply note that when spelled out explicitly, it can be seen to be a straightforward modal fallacy that provides no basis for accepting premise (2).

This does not mean, however, that (2) is not employed by others who are innocent of the fallacy just described. The conditional this premise expresses figures prominently in an argument advanced by Richard Taylor, who agrees with Aristotle and Hasker that the settledness of the future is in conflict with its contingency, but

[12] See Robin Smith (1995: 46).
[13] But see Sorabji (1980: 91-92) for discussion.

concludes that it is the latter rather than the former that is to be rejected. Taylor's striking case for fatalism is very useful for my purposes, both because it states without evasion the problematic conclusion that critics think eternalism is committed to, and because it is one of the few places where one can find an argument, however undeveloped, for (2), the crucial premise of the basic argument from freedom.

In a memorable passage, Taylor tells the story of the hapless Osmo, an ordinary man who somehow comes across a book that chronicles the events of his life with perfect accuracy.[14] Osmo is disturbed to discover that it recounts in great detail not only his past but also his future, including even the time and unfortunate circumstances of his death. The book describes his personal history with such uncanny exactitude, from birth right through to the present moment, that Osmo can only conclude that what it says about his future is true as well. Consequently, he becomes a fatalist, convinced that everything the book predicts is unavoidable – a conclusion that is confirmed as each and every prediction comes to pass. The moral of the story? Taylor says that all of us should be fatalists, since our circumstances do not differ importantly from Osmo's. For there also exists a set of true statements about our own past and future, and indeed about the past and future of the whole world. Unlike Osmo, we may never have the opportunity to learn these statements, but they are true just the same. "Whatever the future might hold, there is nothing anyone can do about it now," Taylor

[14] Taylor (1974: 62-71). The same argument appears in a different form in Taylor (1962). The example he uses there is a newspaper story about a naval battle.

writes. “What will happen cannot be altered. The mere fact that it is going to happen guarantees this.”[15]

The motivation for Taylor’s fatalism has nothing to do with the nature of time, but rather with logical or quasi-logical considerations. Like Aristotle, Taylor employs the law of the excluded middle, though in a different way. Taylor entertains no doubts about the law, and he is adamant that its scope includes statements about the future, since on his view – about which he also entertains no doubt – all statements are timelessly true or false: “Nothing *becomes* true or *ceases* to be true; whatever is truth at all simply *is* true.”[16] It is not clear what makes him so confident of the latter point, especially since he brushes aside as irrelevant the issue of the passage of time, but I certainly have no intention of disputing it, as it is also a direct consequence of the eternalism I endorse. (It is perhaps worth noting, though, that I have no prior commitment to one position or another regarding the applicability of the law of the excluded middle to statements about the future. Eternalism leads me to the belief that future statements are part of its domain, not the other way around.) However, while I agree with Taylor regarding the settledness of the future, and while I can even grant that the future is perhaps, in some qualified sense, inevitable, I dispute his further claim, held in common with libertarians like Hasker, that any of this challenges the notion that agents possess libertarian freedom.

Before explaining this point, I should make clear that Taylor undoubtedly intends his argument as a refutation of alternative possibilities and with it the whole

[15] Taylor (1974: 68).
[16] Ibid., 68-69. Emphasis his.

notion of freedom. Taylor defines fatalism as "the belief that whatever happens is unavoidable." What this means, for him, is that no one is free: "A fatalist...thinks it is not up to him what will happen a thousand years hence, next year, tomorrow, or the very next moment."[17] Why is the future not up to him? Because the fatalist rejects "the assumption that we are free to pursue and realize various alternative future possibilities."[18] Osmo's story is unsettling because of its implication that, whatever happens to us, there is nothing we can do or ever could have done about it. Taylor is contending for the venerable view, of which hard causal determinism is but one species, that there is only one way that things can possibly unfold and that anything that happens is thus entirely outside our control.

Taylor's argument for fatalism can be reconstructed as follows: Since the law of the excluded middle is true, and since all statements are timeless, there is no statement that is exempt from the law, and thus even statements about the future already have truth values. This in turn implies that the future states of affairs these statements express are now settled, that is, it is already either true that they will obtain or true that they will not obtain. *But if these future states of affairs are already settled, then they are also unavoidable, and if they are unavoidable, then no alternative states of affairs are even possible – which is just to say that fatalism is true and freedom is a*

[17] Ibid., 59.
[18] Ibid., 71.

fantasy.[19] I have italicized the last sentence to highlight its importance, as it is really an expansion upon our crucial premise:

(2) If every future state of affairs is settled, then the future holds no alternative possibilities.

Taylor supplies the idea linking the premise's antecedent and consequent, an idea that is also shared by other critics of the compatibility thesis.[20] The idea comes in two parts:

(2a) If a state of affairs is settled, then it is unavoidable.

and

(2b) If a state of affairs is unavoidable, then no alternative states of affairs are possible.

Let us call the attempt to defend (2) by appealing to (2a) and (2b) the "Taylorian strategy." Fortunately for me, not to mention the advocates of freedom whom Taylor is attacking, the strategy fails, as (2a) and (2b) tacitly trade on an ambiguity in the word "unavoidable." That is to say, the unavoidability implied by eternalism is not the unavoidability that precludes the alternative possibilities required by libertarianism.

To make this point clear, it will help to back up a bit. Consider again my freely choosing to eat tuna salad tomorrow. On the libertarian view of freedom, there must be an alternative possibility that involves my choosing otherwise at the appointed time. I claim that eternalism can accommodate this requirement, and rather easily. Let us call the world we inhabit world *TS* and let us say that the point of decision will occur at

[19] Taylor (1962: 61) gives a formal statement of his argument, but it suppresses the assumptions that I wish to highlight.
[20] See e.g. Markosian (1995: 95-96).

time *t*. On the eternalist picture, *TS* timelessly includes *t*, every moment prior to or subsequent to *t*, and everything that exists or occurs at any time in *TS*, including the event of my choosing to eat the tuna salad. However, it is not readily apparent how *TS* could preclude the existence of another possible world – call it *TS′* – that is indistinguishable from *TS* up until *t*, but in which I then choose the roast beef.[21] Couldn't this alternative have been realized? Put another way, it is not apparent why *TS* and *TS′* could not share a world-segment *seg1* spanning the first moment of time (if there is one) up to time *t*, but then have different world segments starting with *t* – call these *seg2* and *seg2′*, respectively – in which I make different choices about what to eat.[22] The fact that the world includes *seg2* hardly challenges the idea that it could have included the alternative *seg2′*.

Or does it? As outlined above, Taylor is convinced that future states of affairs cannot be avoided and that unavoidable states of affairs cannot coexist with alternative possibilities. Of course, in this context the expressions "avoided," "unavoidable" and their cognates can only be taken metaphorically. I might avoid a freight train or a charging rhinoceros, at least if I am quick enough, but I cannot literally avoid or fail to avoid a state of affairs, since a state of affairs is not capable of moving towards me. When someone says that a state of affairs is unavoidable, it is most natural to take this

[21] There would actually be a different alternative possibility corresponding to every different decision I could make at time *t*. The picture gets even more complicated when we consider that there are almost certainly many decisions being made by many people at *t*, so that there would be a possibility corresponding to each of the many possible combination of choices made at *t*, and likewise for every other time at which choices take place. The sheer number of possibilities boggles the mind.

[22] Though my example employs the language of possible worlds, I have not said anything that commits me to one theory or another regarding possible worlds – the reader can fill in his favorite. Indeed, the reader can, without losing anything except clarity, eliminate my talk of possible worlds altogether, substituting in its place talk of sentences that are possibly true.

to mean that no one can do anything to keep it from obtaining. Given this understanding, there does seem to be a limited sense in which the future is unavoidable. Since eternalism entails that things are already slated to turn out a particular way – that the future is settled, that *TS* already *seg2* – it would be quite futile, given how things will turn out, to maintain that anyone could do anything to make things turn out otherwise, as this would involve a blatant contradiction. We can grant Taylor this much.

What cannot be granted, however, is that the absence of alternative possibilities follows from a state of affair's being unavoidable in the limited sense just described, at least if possibility is construed in a way that could help the libertarian. After all, the present is also unavoidable in this limited sense. For example, given that at this moment I am choosing to continue typing, it cannot also be the case that, at the very same moment, I do not choose to continue typing. There is already a fact of the matter about the choice, and hence it is unavoidable: neither I not anyone else can make the choice come out another way. The same can equally be said of past choices. Given that I chose to begin writing a few moments ago, there is nothing that anyone can do to make it the case that I did not choose to begin writing a few moments ago. Do these observations show that the past and present are without alternative possibilities needed to ground libertarian freedom? If so, then the basic argument from freedom is undermined, since *none* of our choices would be free. Fortunately for the libertarian, it is hard to imagine what could license an inference from the fact that a present or past state of affairs is unavoidable, in the limited sense granted, to the conclusion that it is

the only state of affairs possible – an inference which, when laid bare, looks as outrageous as the "Aristotelian" inference discussed earlier. Why treat the future differently?

I submit that Taylor and others who endorse (2) are insufficiently sensitive to the concept of conditional necessity that lies behind the limited notion of unavoidability I have been examining. A clear formulation is provided by Boethius, who first articulated the concept:

> For there are two kinds of necessity: one is simple, as the necessity by which all men are mortals; the other is conditional, as when, if you know that someone is walking, he must necessarily be walking…No necessity forces the man who is voluntarily walking to move forward; but as long as he is walking, he is [conditionally] necessarily moving forward.[23]

It should come as no surprise that Boethius can help us answer the libertarian challenge to the compatibility thesis, as his own belief in world of timeless states of affairs was motivated by a desire to maintain human freedom in the face by divine foreknowledge. Boethius points out that some claims, such as those that are true by definition, are matters of *simple necessity*, i.e. necessity proper. They simply must be true, regardless of anything else that is or is not the case. Other claims are matters of *conditional necessity*: given certain conditions, their truth must follow, even if they are not necessary by themselves. What I have been trying, by degrees, to suggest is that, for the eternalist, a claim about a future state of affairs is conditionally necessary: its truth follows of necessity from the timeless obtaining of the state of affairs that it

[23] Boethius (1962: 117).

expresses. Thus, given that I choose the tuna salad at time *t*, it is conditionally necessary that I choose the tuna salad at time *t* – or, in tensed language, "I will choose the tuna salad tomorrow" is now true. But of course my choosing the tuna salad is not a matter of simple necessity (or if it is, this has nothing to do with the point at issue, the existence of the future).

If my assertion sounds trivial, this is as it should be, for the "necessity" of future states of affairs implied by eternalism is really only conditional necessity, which is to say that their obtaining follows trivially from their obtaining. This sort of "necessity" poses no threat to libertarianism, as it does not suggest that things could not have turned out otherwise. In the language of possible worlds, given that we inhabit *TS*, we cannot somehow switch to *TS'*, any more than we can switch the decisions we made yesterday – but this does not mean that we *could not have* inhabited *TS'*. Future choices are unavoidable, according to eternalism, but only in the obvious way that any obtaining state of affairs is unavoidable – which is to say, in a way that is compatible with alternative possibilities. Taylor's remarks about avoidability and necessity are quite misguided.

It should be clear by now that (2a) may be true, but only if the unavoidability it expresses is of the limited sort I have been discussing. Extending Boethius's language, we might say that the Taylorian strategy for defending (2) only looks attractive if one conflates what we might call "conditional unavoidability" and "simple unavoidability," where the former applies to states of affairs whose unavoidability is merely a matter of conditional necessity, and the latter applies to states of affairs

whose unavoidability is a matter of simple necessity. With these concepts disambiguated, the problem with the Taylorian strategy is easy to see. For if the argument is understood as employing the concept of conditional unavoidability, then (2a) is uncontroversially true, but (2b) is obviously false. On the other hand, if the argument is understood as employing the concept of simple unavoidability, then (2b) is uncontroversially true, but (2a) is obviously false. Finally, if the argument employs one concept of unavoidability in (2a) and another in (2b), then it commits the fallacy of equivocation. In any case, the argument fails.

Since the Taylorian strategy represents the best attempt to defend (2) – or really the only one, it seems, with others simply taking the premise for granted – it is safe to conclude that (2) is defeated, and along with it the basic argument from freedom. However, it is worth pointing out that an even stronger case can be made against it. Lest it occur to the temporalist to try to rescue the argument by tinkering with the concept of unavoidability or by substituting some other concept altogether, I want to suggest that the kind of concerns I have been raising would apply equally to any middle term that could occur in an argument for (2). For consider the following argument scheme:

(2a*) If a state of affairs is settled, then it is *x*.

(2b*) If a state of affairs is *x*, then no alternative states of affairs are possible.

Therefore,

(2) If every future state of affairs is settled, then the future holds no alternative possibilities.[24]

Two problems would arise from any argument fitting this scheme. First, either the expression put in for *x* will be strong enough to make (2b*) come out as unobjectionable, in which case (2a*) will beg the question in favor of fatalism, or it will be weak enough to make (2a*) unobjectionable, in which case (2b*) will beg the question in favor of fatalism. Either way, (2) cannot be defended without a prior commitment to fatalism. Second, no matter what is substituted for *x*, even the most severe presentist must concede that present states of affairs are settled, and thus he will be committed by the conjunction of (2a) and (2b) to fatalism. If these speculations are right, then it is not much of an achievement to show that (2a) and (2b), when conjoined with eternalism, entail fatalism, since the two claims entail fatalism no matter what. Appealing to these claims is also, for obvious reasons, not exactly the best way to motivate an anti-fatalist objection to eternalism. I conclude that the problem is with (2) itself, not with the Taylorian strategy for defending it. The basic argument from freedom appears indefensible.

2.2 Two Improved Arguments from Freedom

Perhaps the argument from freedom can be shored up by substituting a more defensible principle in place of (2). In fact, there may be a residual worry that while I

[24] It will be noticed that (2) mentions the future, whereas (2a*) and (2b*) do not. It might be objected that there is some special quality had by future states of affairs that makes them incompatible with alternative possibilities. But what quality could create additional problems beyond those (supposedly) created by their sheer existence? Recall that it is (E1) that is thought to conflict with freedom.

have shown that eternalism can support a freedom of sorts, this freedom is not the libertarian freedom demanded by the robust theory of persons. Instead, I may be committed to a covert compatibilism. This suggestion opens the way for an improved argument from freedom.

Recall that compatibilism is the view that our actions are both free and determined. Though all my choices are the effects of prior causes, compatibilists say, they are still up to me so long as nothing external to me keeps me from doing what I want. Take, for example, my decision to put on a green shirt today. I certainly did not *have* to do this, according to the compatibilist, since I could surely have put on a blue one or an orange one instead. Nothing forced me to wear the green shirt – after all, if I had chosen to wear the orange one, then I would have put on the orange one. Now, it so happens that my choice was itself determined by a prior cause, the compatibilist adds, but this fact is no threat to freedom, since I was undoubtedly able to do as I wanted. What more could we want from an account of freedom? The problem with the compatibilist account, at least from the perspective of those who wish to maintain what I have called "full freedom," is that while it succeeds in securing alternative possibilities, it fails to satisfy UR, the ultimate responsibility condition identified by Kane. As compatibilists generally acknowledge, my choice to wear a green shirt today did not originate with me, but with certain physical laws and antecedent conditions pre-dating my birth. Compatibilism is a form of determinism, after all, and so it involves the belief that everything that happens today is the result of the laws of nature

together with an earlier condition of the universe.[25] There may still be alternative possibilities on this view, as either the laws of nature or the earlier conditions could have been different in any number of ways, but the view does not allow for my actions to originate with me, even if they are, in one sense, up to me.

This apparent problem can be converted into a compelling argument against the compatibility thesis if it can be shown that eternalism is inconsistent with the claim that we have ultimate responsibility for our actions. Consider again my future choice to eat tuna salad at time *t* in world *TS*. I have claimed that nothing in eternalism rules out the possible existence of another world *TS′* that is indistinguishable from *TS* up until *t*, but in which I then choose not to have tuna salad. If I am right about this, then it would seem that eternalism gives the libertarian what he wants: not only are there real alternatives to the choice I make at *t*, but nothing bars us from saying that the choice originates with me, since it was not the result of deterministic laws – worlds *TS* and *TS′* are just alike up until the point of decision, after all. However, the libertarian might challenge the coherence of the picture I have sketched, contending that, if *TS* and *TS′* differ after time *t*, they could not be absolutely indistinguishable before *t*. For suppose we add the detail that one week prior to *t* in both worlds – call this time t_0 – someone says, "Max will choose the tuna salad next week." Now, as we have seen, the sentence expresses either a truth or a falsehood at t_0, regardless of the speaker's epistemic condition. Thus in *TS* the sentence expresses a truth and in *TS′* it expresses a

[25] At least compatibilists believe this if they are physical determinists. They could also subscribe to other forms of determinism, such as theological determinism, according to which everything that happens results from God's decree. Nothing will be lost by my framing the discussion in terms of physical determinism, as other forms are in conflict with UR for the same reasons.

falsehood, since the state of affairs it describes timelessly obtains in the one world but not the other. The problem for the view I am defending is that this constitutes a difference between *TS* and *TS'* prior to *t* – a difference in what I called *seg1* and *seg1'* – which contradicts my initial stipulation that the two worlds are exactly alike up until the point of decision. Therefore, the eternalist cannot coherently claim that two worlds can be absolutely indistinguishable up until a certain point but different thereafter. It is not that I could not choose anything other than the tuna salad at time *t*, but that I could only do this if things were also different at time t_0 – and this would be no less the case if the prediction had been uttered a year before my choice, or a hundred years, or a million. Given eternalism, then, it looks very much as if my choices always depend on prior conditions, which would mean that I do not have ultimate responsibility for them.

A new argument against the compatibility thesis has emerged, which can be expressed as follows:

(1) If eternalism is true, then every future state of affairs is settled. (Premise)

(2') If every future state of affairs is settled, then no person has ultimate responsibility for his future choices. (Premise)

(3') If libertarianism is true, then persons have ultimate responsibility for their future choices. (Premise)

(4) Therefore, either eternalism is false or libertarianism is false, that is to say, the compatibility thesis is false. (From 1, 2 and 3)

Let us call this the "improved argument from freedom (I)." The first premise and the conclusion are identical to those in the basic argument from freedom, while the middle premises turn on Kane's UR condition rather than the AP condition. I do not dispute

premise (3'), since it is, like (3), true by definition. However, I shall demonstrate that premise (2') rests on a confusion.

The reasoning for the second premise bears some resemblance to what is generally known as the consequence argument, which attempts to refute compatibilism by showing that determinism cannot support the ultimate responsibility supposedly required for our actions to be up to us. The classic formulation of the consequence argument is given by Peter van Inwagen:

> If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us.[26]

As Kane writes in another connection, freedom "seems to require that the *sources* or *origins* of our actions are 'in us' rather than in something else…outside us and beyond our control." He goes on to say that "to be *ultimately responsible* for an action, an agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient reason, cause, or motive for the action's occurring."[27] The consequence argument aims to show that, on the assumption of determinism, the sources of our actions lie elsewhere, namely, with the laws of nature and antecedent conditions, neither of which we can be responsible for.

What does this have to do with eternalism? If it is the case, as eternalism implies, that I will make a certain choice long before I actually make it, then it looks as if the choice does not originate with me at all, but with events in the remote past. Indeed, assuming that I will choose tuna salad tomorrow, the following claim

[26] van Inwagen (1983: 16). The same formulation also appears on p. 56 and p. 222.
[27] Kane (2005: 120). Emphasis his.

(i) Max chooses the tuna salad at *t*.

can be logically deduced from

(ii) The sentence "Max will choose the tuna salad at *t*" expresses a truth at t_0.

The latter is straightforwardly entailed by eternalism, and would even be entailed if t_0 were a time a thousand years prior to my choice. The state of affairs expressed by (ii) is thus a sufficient reason for what (i) expresses: If (ii) is true, then (i) must be true as well. How can the eternalist claim that my choice will up to me when there was a sufficient reason for my choice that existed before I was even born?

The answer is actually quite simple. While it is no doubt true that (ii) is sufficient for (i), it is equally true that (i) is sufficient for (ii), at least given eternalism. On the eternalist picture (and given our initial assumption that t_0 is earlier than *t*), the two statements are mutually entailing; they are, necessarily, true or false together. However, this obviously does not mean that (ii) does not depend on (i) in the sense that counts. For consider the following pair of claims:

(iii) I satisfy the definition of "husband."

(iv) I am a man, I have gotten married, my spouse is alive, and I have not been the subject of an annulment or divorce.

These sentences are also mutually entailing (at least assuming the pronouns in each refer to the same person) and thus either sentence is a sufficient condition for the other. Yet we do not think that the state of affairs expressed by (iii) somehow causes or determines the state of affairs expressed by (iv) or that what (iv) describes somehow has its source or origin in what is described in (iii). The dependence clearly goes the

other way: I satisfy the definition of "husband" because I am a man, I have gotten married, and so on.[28] Logic permits us to draw an inference from either sentence to the other, but what we might call the direction of explanation goes only from (iv) to (iii).

The same also goes for sentences (i) and (ii). Even though we can logically infer the truth of (i) from the truth of (ii), it is of vital importance that the state of affairs expressed in (ii) obtains because of the state of affairs expressed in (i), not the other way around. It is useful to keep in mind Kane's careful formulation of the UR condition: "an agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient reason, cause, or motive for the action's occurring." Or as he says with even more clarity elsewhere, "the action cannot have a sufficient reason…*for which the agent is not also responsible*."[29] It is not that an agent's choices cannot have sufficient reasons at all if UR is to be satisfied – this would be absurd, as every condition is at least a sufficient condition for itself – but rather that the agent must be responsible for any sufficient reasons that his choices have. And there is nothing in eternalism to prevent us from saying that I, rather than some set of conditions in the remote past, am responsible for the fact that (i) obtains. The eternalist can legitimately say that is because of me, and not because of the state of affairs that (ii) expresses, that I choose the tuna salad at time *t*. (Or if one cannot legitimately say this, it has nothing to do with any distinctive feature eternalism, but with some other problem that critics of libertarianism are apt to

[28] Compare *Euthyphro*, 10a-10b, where Plato has Socrates suggest a similar line of reasoning, though in another connection.
[29] Kane (1998: 73). Emphasis his.

point out.) The direction of explanation goes from (i) to (ii), not the other way around. Premise (2') is clearly false.

I hasten to add that the foregoing does show that the eternalist picture as I have presented it requires a small modification, though not one that undercuts the theory in any way. The critic is right to point out that if I choose one way at time *t* in *TS* and another way at *t* in *TS'*, then *TS* and *TS'* cannot be the same in every respect prior to that point. As we have seen, certain states of affairs occurring prior to *t*, such as the one expressed by (ii), will obtain in one world and not in the other. Thus I need to make a distinction between what might be termed "qualitative identity" on the one hand and "factual identity" on the other. Returning to worlds *TS* and *TS'*, let us now say that *TS* is composed of *seg1*, which consists of everything prior to time *t*, and *seg2*, which consists of *t* and everything afterwards. Likewise, let us now say that *TS'* is composed of *seg1'* and *seg2'*, and these are also divided at time *t*.[30] Finally, let us say that *seg1* and *seg1'* are *qualitatively identical* if the only differences between them are those due to differences between what occurs in *seg2* and *seg2'*, and let us say that they are *factually identical* if they are alike in every respect, including what happens in *seg2* and *seg2'*. It is easy to see that *seg1* and *seg1'* are qualitatively identical but not factually identical.[31] To be precise, then, I should say that, assuming I choose to have

[30] I use "*t*" to denote the point of decision in both *TS* and *TS'* because I consider this to be the very same point. If this seems worrisome for any reason, the whole discussion could be framed in terms of pairs of what we might call "time complements," which would be corresponding times in two worlds with qualitatively identical initial segments, where the sense of "qualitatively" is given below. I leave this translation as an exercise for the reader, as the explanation in the body is already complicated enough.
[31] Indeed, if the identity of indiscernibles is true, then the segments of two different possible worlds could never be factually identical, even if qualitatively identical, since factual identity would imply numerical identity.

tuna salad at *t* in *TS*, there is nothing in eternalism to rule out the possible existence of another world *TS′* that is qualitatively identical (though not factually identical) to *TS* up until *t*, but in which I then choose something else. Though a different choice at *t* entails a difference in what states of affairs obtain prior to *t*, it is not the sort of difference that challenges the idea that my choice is really up to me, since the difference is itself the result of my choice. In short, even given the modification just described, eternalism gives us no reason to think that I could not choose otherwise or that my choice does not originate with me – which is to say, it is capable of simultaneously satisfying the AP and UR conditions required for libertarian freedom.

There is one consequence of the view just sketched that some could find problematic, namely, that it seems to suggest the presence of backwards causation. After all, if someone says, "Max will choose tuna salad tomorrow," it is a future state of affairs that makes it the case that he expresses a truth today. Of course, it is not clear that real causation is involved here at all, as *expressing a truth* looks to be a Cambridge property, but even if it involved, this need not worry the eternalist, for three reasons. First, while there may be very good grounds for denying the possibility of backwards causation in the general case, it is hard to see why it should be objectionable in the case of such exotic states of affairs as that expressed by

(ii) The sentence "Max will choose the tuna salad at t" expresses a truth at t_0.

I submit that there are neither strong pre-theoretical intuitions nor principled philosophical arguments against the possibility that what (ii) expresses could be

caused by a subsequent state of affairs. After all, action at a distance seems nearly as problematic as backwards causation, and yet no one thinks this prevents me from bringing about, by a simple mental act, the state of affairs expressed by

(v) At *t*, Max thinks about the farthest star from him at *t*.

Second, in this chapter I am defending the position that eternalism and libertarianism can be conjoined without significantly adding to the conceptual cost of either. If the kind of backwards causation I am committed to is problematic, the problem stems from eternalism alone and not its conjunction with libertarianism. For even if determinism is right, the eternalist must still say that sentences like (ii) are true in virtue of subsequent states of affairs. Whether this is a price worth paying is, of course, another question, but this leads to my third point: Every competitor to eternalism involves conceptual costs of its own. I shall draw attention to some of these costs at various places in this essay, and I shall survey them together in Chapter 6, but for now I note that only temporal anti-realists and shrinking tree theorists manage to avoid backwards causation, since all other forms of temporalism include a unique future in their most inclusive domain of quantification. And the theories that do avoid this are committed to even stranger claims – e.g. that "George Washington" refers to an abstract entity – than the limited and benign form of backwards causation that may be implied by eternalism. I conclude that eternalism and (FF) can be conjoined with conceptual impunity.

The improved argument from freedom (I), then, poses no threat to eternalism. However, it might be possible to advance another argument that appeals to an

additional, or merely tacit, thesis associated with libertarianism, even if it is not explicitly captured in (FF). Kane's major contributions to the literature on freedom do not directly address the issue of time, but Kane does make some remarks that are easily translated into an argument against the compatibility thesis. Consider his gloss on van Inwagen's statement of the consequence argument against compatibilism:

> To say it is not "up to us" what "went on before we were born," or "what the laws of nature are," is to say that there is nothing we can do now to change the past or alter the laws of nature.[32]

Van Inwagen does not use the language of change at all, but Kane clearly considers it to be intimately tied to freedom, as references to changeability frequently crop up in his discussions of the consequence argument.[33] Changeability also enters into his statement of a related argument against the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom, a key premise of which is: "There is nothing we can do now to change the fact that God believed, at some time before we were born, that our present actions would occur."[34] As Kane notes, the divine timelessness solution can be criticized with a parallel argument that substitutes references to God's timeless knowledge for references to his foreknowledge, e.g.: "[T]here is nothing we can do now to change the fact that God believes from eternity that our present actions occur."[35] These remarks express an intuition that the possibility of change of a certain sort is essential to freedom; in fact, Kane's remarks seem to suggest the thought that the settledness of a

[32] Kane (2005: 23).
[33] See, for instance, Kane (1998: 46).
[34] Kane (2005: 151).
[35] Ibid, 154. Kane credits Zagzebski for this point. However, like van Inwagen, Zagzebski makes no reference to change in her formulations of the arguments against foreknowledge and timeless knowledge. See Zagzebski (2001: 52).

choice would be problematic, since it would be at odds with its changeability. Does this intuition create a problem for eternalism?

The worry just described may be employed in what I call the "improved argument from freedom (II)":

(1) If eternalism is true, then every future state of affairs is settled. (Premise)

(2") If every future state of affairs is settled, then no person can change how a future state of affairs will turn out. (Premise)

(3") If libertarianism is true, then a person can change how a future state of affairs will turn out. (Premise)

(4) Therefore, either eternalism is false or libertarianism is false, that is to say, the compatibility thesis is false. (From 1, 2 and 3)

I have tried to capture Kane's emphasis on changeability in premises (2") and (3"). It should be noted that, while Kane's remarks seem to indicate a friendliness towards a libertarian argument from changeability, he has not actually advanced the above argument himself.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, Kane identifies the presence of alternative possibilities and the possession of ultimate responsibility as the two conditions that any adequate theory of freedom must satisfy. Conspicuously absent from either of these conditions, however, is any mention of changeability.[36] One way to generate a change requirement would be to try to show it to be a corollary of AP or UR. Another would be to try to argue that it should be added to AP and UR as a third condition of a fully robust theory of freedom. The difference between the two

[36] See Kane (1998: 33, 35) for detailed definitions of AP and UR.

strategies is immaterial in the present connection, however, because the concept of changeability cannot help the critic of the compatibility thesis. To be sure, certain kinds of change do seem involved in the exercise of freedom as we usually understand it. I might decide now to stop writing an hour from now, but then change my mind when that time arrives and decide to continue writing instead. Or I might decide now to turn on the radio, but then, having turned it on, change my mind a moment later and decide to turn it off again. Each case certainly involves a change, as indicated by the colloquial expression "change my mind," but neither involves the changeability of a single state of affairs required by (3''). Each example involves two distinct states of affairs, an initial choice and a separate, subsequent choice that "changes" the first one, i.e. cancels or reverses some of its effects. When I decide to continue writing after having decided earlier to stop, this new decision does not somehow make it the case that the earlier decision never occurred. It merely it makes it the case that I do not finish carrying out the earlier decision. And when I decide to turn the radio off after having turned it on, I merely undo the consequences of an earlier decision that I did finish carrying out. These changes are common enough, but they do not involve anything that might be described as "changing how a future state of affairs turns out." Rather, each example merely involves *affecting* how a future state of affairs turns out, and affecting it in a way that represents a change from how things turned out at an earlier time. This sort of change is, of course, perfectly consistent with eternalism, since it does not involve altering anything that is already settled.

The critic might complain that the sort of changeability reflected in my examples is not the sort appealed to in the improved argument (II). Unfortunately, the prospects for substituting another kind of changeability are grim, since the kind required to make the argument go through would necessarily be of a kind that no theory of freedom could demand. The reason for this is familiar from my earlier discussion of fatalism: However we were to conceive of unchangeableness, if it were entailed by the settledness of a state of affairs, then it would be no less entailed by the settledness of present and past states of affairs than by future ones. If the concept were strong enough to create problems for the future, it would also create them for the present and past, and if it were weak enough *not* to create problems for the present and past, then it would be too weak to create problems for the future. Either way, the notion of changeability fares no better than that of avoidability, and the libertarian is deprived of the basis for his critique.[37] The improved argument from freedom (II) fails like the others.

The considerations adduced in this chapter are not only useful for rebutting the leading versions of the argument from freedom considered here, but are also suggestive of a strategy for coping with other arguments constructed along the same lines. For I submit that *any* criticism of the eternalist's commitment to a settled future will create analogous problems for a proposition that not even the staunchest

[37] Incidentally, my argument also shows that Kane's arguments against foreknowledge and timeless knowledge are unsound, since there is no plausible sense in which an agent must, in order to be free, be able to change what God foreknows or timelessly knows.

temporalist can deny, namely, that the present and the past are settled.[38] But even if I am mistaken in this, no other arguments against the compatibility of (E1) and (FF) appear to be on the horizon. As I pointed out above, the denial of their compatibility usually comes in the form of an undefended assumption, and the explicit arguments that are on offer trade on confusions about either what eternalism implies or what full freedom requires.

Still, doubts may linger. Insofar as these are based upon something that can be articulated, probably the only remaining reason for them has to do with the virtually universal belief in an asymmetry between the past and present on one hand and the future on the other: the future just seems "open" in a way that the past and present are not, and this openness seems importantly connected to our freedom. It must be pointed out, though, that this final worry is not really a species of the argument from freedom at all, but is rather one aspect of the argument from experience, which I shall consider in detail in Chapter 4. In that chapter I shall sketch an account of temporal experience that does justice to both our sense that the future is the domain of free action and to the eternalist claim that the future is settled. The openness of the future, I shall claim, is just its causal openness relative to previous times. Thus, while the future is rightly judged to be open, predications of openness, like predications of presentness, must be relativized to times rather than treated as properties inhering in times irrespective of any such predications. As my discussion of worlds TS and TS' made clear, a theory of

[38] With one exception. Markosian (1995) actually argues that the past is open in just the way that the critic of my view supposes the future is open. But not even Markosian claims that the *present* is open.

time that makes room for relative openness is all that is needed to ground the alternative possibilities and ultimate responsibility demanded by (FF).

3. Responsibility

> We never know the whole man, though sometimes, in quick flashes, we know the true man…I am today the same person as that solemn little girl with pale flaxen sausage curls. The house in which the spirit dwells, grows, develops instincts and tastes and emotions and intellectual capacities, but I myself, the true Agatha, am the same. I do not know the whole Agatha. The whole Agatha, so I believe, is known only to God.
>
> – Agatha Christie, *An Autobiography*

A fully robust theory of human persons must make room for persons to bear genuine responsibility for what they do. That is, it must allow for persons to deserve praise or blame for their actions, and to deserve it, not on the basis of mere convention or stipulation, but on the basis of objective merit, positive or negative, accruing to their actions. This requirement is encapsulated in

(RR) Human persons have *real responsibility*, that is, they are sometimes the bearers of objective merit for their actions.

Responsibility is a moral matter, but it also has a metaphysical dimension, as our attributions of responsibility very often assume the persistence of the individual through time.[1] For sometimes we praise, scold, reward, punish, or otherwise impose consequences on persons on the basis of what we judge to be the merits of their earlier actions. Let us say, then, that the question of *trans-temporal responsibility* is the question of whether, and how, a person can bear real responsibility at a time for actions performed at an earlier time. We will see that the metaphysical implications of our ordinary attributions of trans-temporal responsibility seem to create a problem for eternalism.

[1] Very often, but not always. For we sometimes praise or blame people for their present actions. We also sometimes praise and blame retroactively, as with the dead.

But to see the problem, two theories of persistence must first be distinguished. The first theory, *endurantism*, maintains that an object persists by enduring, that is, by being a temporally unextended three-dimensional object that is wholly located at each individual moment of its existence, whereas the second theory, *perdurantism*, maintains that on object persists by perduring, that is, by being a four-dimensional object that is extended through space-time, with only one proper part – what is called a *temporal part* – located at any individual moment of its existence. Since eternalism conceives the world as a "block universe," i.e. a four-dimensional manifold consisting of a vast succession of timelessly existing objects and states of affairs, it is often supposed that the theory is also committed to the existence of "block persons," i.e. persons conceived as the four-dimensional entities posited by perdurantism. In one observer's words, "Temporal parts and tenseless existence usually come together in a package deal."[2] It should come as no surprise, then, that perdurantism has proven to be a popular theory among eternalists.[3]

Unfortunately, the demands of my project pose a challenge for perdurantism. As I shall show, perdurantism cannot cope with trans-temporal responsibility without involving either the denial of (RR) or a(nother) drastic departure from our received conceptual framework. Since my project treats (RR) as controlling and treats other departures as costs that are best avoided where feasible, I cannot take perdurantism for granted. Thus I must go on to show that, despite initial appearances, eternalism fits as

[2] van Cleve (1986: 155). Quoted in Carter and Hestevold (1994: 269). A similar sentiment is expressed by Delmas Lewis (1986) and Hoy (1978). See Carter and Hestevold (1994, n.2) for more references.
[3] See e.g. Russell (1914: ch. 5), Quine (1953, 1981: 10), Williams (1951), Sider (2001), Falk (2004).

naturally with endurantism as it does with perdurantism. Though the present chapter ranges over many subjects, its ultimate aim is to show that, while (RR) may be in tension with one theory of persistence often associated with eternalism, it presents no problem for eternalism itself.

3.1 Endurance and Responsibility

The problem of trans-temporal responsibility shows that, whatever else we might say about perdurantism, it is at odds with the claim that people sometimes bear real responsibility for their actions. I shall argue for this conclusion by considering the perfectly ordinary attributions of blame that we make in everyday life. Suppose that an agent A commits a crime *c* at time t_1. Suppose, further, that, at a substantially later time t_2, A is blamed for *c*. Finally, suppose that the blame is merited: A really deserves to be blamed for *c*. The particulars of the situation are of little importance. The crime could be high treason or the knocking over of a liquor store; the assignment of blame could come a week later or a decade later; the assignment could be accompanied by rebuke, punishment, or no outward consequences at all. What is crucial is that A still be around to receive the blame at t_2 – this is not a case of retroactive blame. How does perdurantism fare on this scenario? Consider what I call the *Blame Argument*:

(1) If perdurantism is true, then the proper performer of *c* is A-at-t_1 or is all-of-A. (Premise)

(2) If the proper performer of *c* is A-at-t_1, then what is blamed is numerically distinct from the proper performer of *c*. (Premise)

(3) If what is blamed is numerically distinct from the proper performer of *c*, then our ordinary conceptual framework requires substantial revision. (Premise)

(4) If the proper performer of *c* is all-of-A, then what is blamed is not conscious. (Premise)

(5) If what is blamed is not conscious, then our ordinary conceptual framework requires substantial revision. (Premise)

(6) Therefore, perdurantism requires substantial revision to our ordinary conceptual framework. (From 1-5)

The expression "proper performer" is, of course, a term of art. It is best approached by way of example. Imagine two philosophers engaged in a dispute over the expression "act of Congress." The first philosopher, a democratic descendant of Thomas Hobbes, claims that Congress is an agent in its own right, an artificial person composed of several hundred congressmen: a "Leviathan Congress," as it were. This philosopher puts forward the idea that an act of Congress is an act of a single artificial person, and cannot be reduced to the actions of the particular members of Congress. The second philosopher, on the other hand, claims that what we call "Congress" is just a sum of individual congressmen, and that the "act" attributed to this sum is nothing more than a set of acts performed by its individual members. Their dispute is over who or what, in the strictest sense, can be said to perform what we call an "act of Congress."[4] More precisely, I define the *proper performer* of an action as the entity (or entities) that figures into the state of affairs in virtue of which all correct attributions of responsibility for the action, direct or indirect, literal or metaphorical, or made. If the

[4] Martinich (unpublished: ch. 2) discusses a dispute along these lines in connection with the question of authorial intent. Martinich endorses something like the Hobbesian doctrine of artificial persons, claiming that they can be the authors of laws and other texts. See Hobbes (1996: pt. I).

Hobbesian is right, the proper performer of an act of Congress is Congress itself, and if the anti-Hobbesian is right, its proper performers are individual congressmen.[5] The Blame Argument poses the question of proper performance to the perdurantist: In the last analysis, who or what performs a given action? Who or what is responsible for *c*?

Premise (1) identifies the perdurantist's most promising options for handling assignments of blame. Since the perdurantist treats A as a four-dimensional object with a three-dimensional temporal part existing at t_1, he presumably must identify the proper performer of *c* as A-at-t_1, i.e. the three-dimensional temporal part of A existing at t_1, or else as all-of-A, i.e. the entire four-dimensional entity that constitutes A. Other potential candidates for the proper performer of *c*, such as another instantaneous temporal part or four-dimensional segment of A, seem intolerably arbitrary.

There is, however, one variation on perdurantism that bears mentioning here, namely, the *stage view*.[6] According to this theory, a human person is, strictly speaking, a four-dimensional entity, but the subjects of ordinary uses of names, pronouns, and other expressions are three-dimensional stages of such entities. The purported advantage of the stage view is that it allows one to appeal to perdurance to solve various puzzles while also preserving the sense of everyday speech about persons and

[5] Examples could be multiplied. Imagine two philosophers arguing over whether an action performed by someone with multiple personalities disorder is performed, in the last analysis, by a single personality or by a person that is coextensive with all of the personalities. Or imagine a strange argument over whether a certain firing of a gun is performed by the finger that pulls the trigger or the person whom the finger belongs to. Each dispute involves a different set of metaphysical issues, but all of them involve a disagreement about proper performance.

[6] Sider (2001) and Hawley (2002) are the leading defenders of the stage view. Balashov (forthcoming) calls the stage view "exdurantism."

other objects.[7] I shall return to the stage view below, but here I wish to consider a possibility that a stage theorist could suggest (though none has actually suggested it). Why assume that *c* even has a unique proper performer? Instead, perhaps we should say that it has many proper performers, so that the proper performer of *c* at t_1 is A-at-t_1, the proper performer at t_2 is A-at-t_2, and so on. Just as the non-Hobbesian would insist that it is mistaken to attribute what we call an "act of Congress" to any single member of Congress, so the stage theorist could insist that it is misleading to pin the blame for *c* on any individual constituent of A. It is not that all-of-A he proper performer, but that *c* is a sort of collective act performed by A's parts. This proposal, bizarre as it may sound, would track our assignments of trans-temporal responsibility in everyday speech while also avoiding whatever problems beset the identification of either A-at-t_1 or all-of-A as the unique proper performer of *c*.

Unfortunately, despite whatever other advantages the stage view might have, it does not provide a viable escape from the dilemma posed in premise (1). For the stage view is at bottom a semantic thesis, an improvement upon garden-variety perdurantism that enables its adherents to come closer to preserving the commitments of ordinary speech. What is at issue in the Blame Argument, however, is not whether we would actually assign proper performance to A-at-t_2 in everyday contexts – a claim that is anyway implausible – but whether such an assignment would be appropriate. After all, the set-up of the argument simply stipulates that the assignment of blame at t_2 is merited, that A really deserves to be blamed for the crime at t_2. It is perfectly possible

[7] See ibid., 188ff.

to challenge this stipulation, and I shall in fact entertain doubts about it below. But the argument itself does not turn on whatever attributions of blame are actually made. (Indeed, the argument could have been framed, if more awkwardly, without any mention of blame attribution at all.) The question the argument raises is metaphysical: who or what actually committed crime *c*? There does not seem to be any reasonable sense in which a part of A existing after *t* could have been in on the crime at *t*, if for no other reason than that this would involve a form of backwards causation that is far more counter-intuitive than the very limited kind contemplated in the previous chapter. I conclude that (1) exhausts the perdurantist's plausible alternatives.

Premise (2) identifies a consequence of grasping the first horn of the dilemma presented in (1). If A-at-t_1 is the proper performer of *c*, then something other than the proper performer gets blamed at t_2, as A-at-t_1 is no longer around. This point is rather obvious, but in case there is any doubt, consider the possibility that an attribution of blame at t_2 would lead to imprisonment or another punishment for crime *c*. If someone is wholly spatially located in Alaska, then he obviously cannot be imprisoned in Texas, at least not without being brought to Texas first. Likewise, A-at-t_1 cannot be imprisoned at t_2, at least not without somehow being brought forward to t_2. But if A-at-t_1 could somehow be brought to t_2, then we would not be dealing with perdurantism at all, but with a form of endurantism, as a single entity would be wholly present at separate times. Premise (2) thus also seems hard to deny: given the supposition that the proper performer of *c* is A-at-t_1, something other than A-at-t_1 is the subject of blame at t_2.

Premise (3) requires more defense. This premise draws out a further consequence of the first horn of the dilemma, which is that assigning the blame for *c* to someone or something other than the proper performer of *c* fails to square with standard beliefs about blame attribution. It seems clear that the following principle – call it the *Identity Principle* – is something practically everyone takes for granted:

> IP It is never justifiable to blame one person or thing for a wrongdoing performed by some other distinct person or thing.

It is hard to imagine anything more fundamental to ordinary moral reasoning than the notion that one person should not be blamed for the wrongdoings of another. We do not think it reasonable to hold someone responsible for, say, the crimes of a family member, or of a stranger. IP expresses the very natural assumption that rightful blame attributions depend on identity attributions.

An illustration will underscore how IP plays out with respect to blame attributions of the trans-temporal variety, as in the case of A. Suppose that someone, standing before a judge to account for an earlier crime, were to say in defense, "I am a *completely* different person now." Depending on the circumstances of the case and the credibility of the defendant's claim, any of the following responses might potentially be appropriate:

> (a) Yes, your character has changed so dramatically that you are literally a different person from the one who committed the offense. I therefore cannot hold you responsible.
>
> (b) Strictly speaking, you are the person who committed the offense, but your character has changed so dramatically that I it would be unfair to hold you responsible.

(c) Even though your character has changed very dramatically, you are still the person who committed the offense. You must still therefore be held responsible.

(d) You have not changed in any important way. You must be held responsible for the offense.

Response (a) expresses the judgment that the defendant is a distinct person from the criminal and excuses him on this basis. Response (b) denies that the defendant is literally a distinct person from the criminal, but still excuses him on the basis of qualitative changes he has undergone. Response (c) acknowledges qualitative changes undergone by the defendant, but insists on holding him responsible on the basis of the judgment that he is identical to the criminal. Response (d) denies that the defendant is either distinct or significantly qualitatively different from the criminal and thus denies any basis for leniency. Now consider a fifth response:

(e) I agree that your character has changed so dramatically that you are literally a different person from the one who committed the offense. Nevertheless, I am going to hold you responsible.

This is the one sentiment that one would never expect to hear from the mouth of a judge or any other person in possession of his senses.[8] It is safe to say that most of us would take the reasoning expressed in (e) to be the very definition of injustice, especially in cases where serious consequences such as imprisonment are at stake. In short, while we may not regard our attributions of trans-temporal identity as *sufficient* grounds for attributions of trans-temporal blame – witness sentence (a) – we certainly do consider them to be *necessary* grounds.

[8] I assume that ordinary moral beliefs are reflected in the kind of reasoning that occurs in a courtroom. If there is any doubt about this, the example could be reframed in terms of another situation in daily life.

At this point the perdurantist could try to alleviate the tension between perdurantism and ordinary blame attributions by interpreting sentences such as (a) through (d) as expressing, not numerical identity – i.e. *being the same thing as* – but as expressing some other kind of "identity." Probably the most promising strategy along these lines for the perdurantist is to invoke temporal counterpart theory, which is like David Lewis's modal counterpart theory except that the counterpart relation is said to hold between concrete objects existing at different times rather than in different possible worlds.[9] Sider makes this very move to bolster the stage theory's claim to preserve the commitments of ordinary discourse. Sider writes,

> According to my temporal counterpart theory, the truth condition of an utterance of 'Ted was once a boy' is this: there exists some person stage *x* prior to the time of the utterance, such that *x* is a boy, and *x* bears the temporal counterpart relation to Ted.[10]

The idea here is that a tensed sentence about a presently existing person stage is made true (if true at all) by a fact about an earlier or later person stage that is its temporal counterpart. Armed with temporal counterpart theory, the stage theorist can extend this analysis to sentiments of the sort expressed by (a) though (d), saying that what appear on the surface to be expressions of trans-temporal identity are really expressions of the temporal counterpart relation. As Sider says in connection with his treatment of fission cases, "[t]o say that Ted will be identical to Ed is to say that Ted has a future (person) counterpart that is identical to Ed."[11] Similarly, sentences (b) and (c) could be

[9] An early statement of modal counterpart theory is David Lewis (1968). A full development of it is David Lewis (1986).
[10] Sider (2001: 193).
[11] Ibid., 201.

interpreted as asserting, not the numerical identity of the defendant and the criminal, but what we might call their "counterpart identity," i.e. a kind of personal identity holding between two entities in virtue of the temporal counterpart relation,[12] while sentences (a) and (c) could be interpreted as denying the counterpart identity of the defendant and criminal.[13] On this proposal, trans-temporal blame attributions would not require numerical identity attributions, after all, but only temporal counterpart identity attributions. With the ordinary sense of sentences like (a) through (d) preserved, the proposal apparently allows us to dispense with IP altogether.

As ingenious as temporal counterpart theory is, it has at least one implication that should give us pause. Consider the perfectly natural sentiment expressed by an aging Agatha Christie in her autobiography: "I am today the same person as that solemn little girl with pale flaxen sausage curls." This sentence is importantly different from "Ted was once a boy," in that it is phrased in the present tense. Arguably, the most straightforward reading treats Christie's claim as a trans-temporal identity statement, made true (if at all) by the author's being numerically identical to "that solemn little girl" existing earlier. But on Sider's theory, the sentence could not express trans-temporal identity, or if it does express this, the sentence is automatically false. To be sure, Sider can provide an alternative reading that is natural enough, interpreting "I am that solemn little girl" as a poetic way of saying, "I *was* that solemn little girl," a statement made true (if true at all) by the author's having a past

[12] Or perhaps the counterpart identity relation holds in virtue of the personal identity relation. The difference matters little in the present context.
[13] Sider explicitly offers the stage theory as a supplement to Derek Parfit's (1986) theory of personal identity. See Sider (2001: 203ff, 1996).

counterpart that is identical to the solemn little girl. There may be nothing objectionable in the poetic interpretation – though Christie's inclusion of the word "today" suggests otherwise – but it is a strange consequence of Sider's theory that a literal reading of a sentence of this kind could *never* be appropriate. Regardless of how we interpret Christie, surely there are occasions when one intends to express real identity over time. Should we say in advance that one could never correctly express such a sentiment? Despite Sider's stated deference to ordinary beliefs, his theory would make every instance of a non-negligible class of ordinary statements automatically false.

The problem is intensified by the fact that we also seem to make blame attributions on the basis of judgments of trans-temporal identity. For example, imagine another courtroom setting, this one involving a prosecuting attorney who describes in gruesome detail a series of past crimes perpetrated by a man in a black mask. Though no one saw the criminal's face at the time of the crimes, the prosecutor aims to prove that the person on the stand is the one who was wearing the mask. But in a dramatic turn of events, a stranger rises in the gallery and proclaims, "I should be on the stand, for I am the man in the black mask!" Here we have what appears to be not only a trans-temporal identity statement ("I am the man in the black mask"), as in the Christie example, but one that essentially involves an ascription of blame ("I should be on the stand"). The stranger seems to be saying that he should be put on the stand now because he is the same person as the past criminal. It is possible that the stranger is

speaking poetically, of course, but if he is not, then he violates IP, as does anyone who attributes blame on the basis of a judgment of trans-temporal identity.

I hasten to add that the objection just outlined is not to be confused with the well-known objection raised by Saul Kripke against David Lewis's modal counterpart theory. Inviting us to consider the sentence, "Humphrey might have won the election," Kripke claims that modal counterpart theory tells us that

> …we are not talking about something that might have happened to *Humphrey* but to someone else, a 'counterpart'. Probably, however, Humphrey could not care less whether someone *else*, no matter how much resembling him, would have been victorious in another possible world.[14]

As Sider rightly points out, the counterpart theorist does not interpret the sentence as talking about someone other than Humphrey. Lewis notes in his rejoinder that, "[t]hanks to the victorious counterpart, Humphrey has the requisite modal property: we can truly say that *he* might have won."[15] Modal counterpart theory grants that Humphrey need only care about his own status rather than the status of his counterpart. It simply adds that his own status as possibly victorious is due to the victorious status of his modal counterpart.

I acknowledge that Lewis has gotten the better part of the argument here. However, it is important to point out that, by the admission of both Lewis and Sider, counterparts are not numerically identical to one another, either in the modal case or in the temporal case. Though counterpart theory, whether modal or temporal, may make many of the statements we are interested in come out true in the right circumstances, it

[14] Kripke (1972: 45).
[15] David Lewis (1986: 196), as quoted in Sider (2001: 195)

does not make *all* of them come out true. Neither Humphrey nor Christie nor the stranger in the gallery is the very same person as his counterpart; each merely bears some other, albeit intimate, relation to his counterpart. This observation is important for my purposes because it shows that temporal counterpart theory, which purports to provide needed support for the stage view, cannot be reconciled to our ordinary ways of speaking, as it rules out the truth of a whole class of ordinary statements in advance.

Furthermore, there is reason to suspect that the problem runs deeper than the somewhat unusual sentences used by Christie and the stranger in the gallery. For the theory also gives inadequate analyses of sentences like (a) through (d), which are far more pervasive. The reason for this inadequacy is the rather obvious fact that no speaker who has not been exposed to temporal counterpart theory understands himself to be attributing temporal counterpart identity when he utters a sentence like (a) through (d). Suppose that Lois Lane, upon learning Clark Kent's identity, were to say

(f) You are Superman.

which seems a clear example of an identity statement, and no recognition of trans-temporal identity is involved. Now compare this to

(b) Strictly speaking, you are the person who committed the offense, but your character has changed so dramatically that I it would be unfair to hold you responsible.

On Sider's theory, though the copula in (f) expresses numerical identity, the copula in (b) expresses what I have been calling counterpart identity. And yet we do seem to make any cognitive distinction between these two ways to use the copula. I am not denying that the forms of the verb "to be" have a variety of uses in natural language,

many of which have nothing to do with numerical identity. My point, rather, is that we would know it if we were using the verb in one way in sentences like (f) and another way in sentences like (b). Though the average person may know nothing of the identity of indiscernibles or the indiscernibility of identicals, he does know the difference between saying that *x* and *y* are the very same thing and saying that *x* and *y* are very similar and connected in important ways. Are we to believe that the average person has similarity and connectedness in mind when he utters a sentence like (b), but not when he utters a sentence like (f)? Whatever the states of affairs are that make sentences like (b) true, the ordinary person who uses such sentences is surely not thinking about temporal counterpart identity. All of this further underscores my point that temporal counterpart theory and the stage view that depends on it are, despite their vaunted advantages, irreconcilable with our ordinary ways of speaking.

Let us say, then, that the perdurantist who grasps the first horn of my dilemma must either deny IP or deny the following *identity attribution* principle:

> IA Persons make many statements attributing trans-temporal identity in ordinary contexts, and some of these statements are true.[16]

Let me be clear: there may be other good motivations for positing temporal parts and supplementing it with the stage view and temporal counterpart theory. My aim here is only to defend premise (3), according to which the perdurantist, if he identifies A-at-t_1 as the proper performer of crime *c*, must also call for substantial revisions to our

[16] This principle may actually run afoul of another component of the robust theory of persons, (RF), according to which persons are not systematically deceived about important features of the world. As this suggestion is controversial, I shall not pursue here.

ordinary conceptual framework. The foregoing considerations show that the perdurantist can either jettison IP or he can jettison IA, which is to say that (3) is true.

The next section of the Blame Argument can be addressed more briefly, as it has few, if any, defenders. This section draws out the consequences of the second horn of the perdurantist's dilemma, the view that the proper performer of crime *c* is all-of-A rather than the temporal part A-at-t_1. Premise (4) asserts that all-of-A, whatever it is, is not the sort of thing that has conscious experiences. Earlier we considered the example of the democratic Hobbesian, who claims that Congress, as an agent in its own right, makes choices that are not reducible to the choices of its members. Perhaps the Hobbesian could go even further – certainly further than Hobbes – and contend that Congress also has a conscious mental life over and above the conscious states of its members. Could the perdurantist say something similar about all-of-A, with the whole four-dimensional entity somehow being the locus of its own conscious experience? It is hard to see how one might motivate such a suggestion. As Delmas Lewis argues, the idea that I should be held responsible for an action

> is a rather bizarre suggestion if I am…a very complex temporal solid embedded in a tenseless spatiotemporal matrix with other objects and events and standing in changeless causal relations to other tenseless existents. This tenseless person is not itself conscious, although many of its parts are. What would it mean to assign responsibility to such an individual? I have no idea, nor can I imagine any point in doing so.[17]

Lewis seems to be suggesting that a "tenseless person" – by which he means a perduring person – is simply not the kind of thing that would possess consciousness,

[17] Delmas Lewis (1986: 307). Lewis is actually trying to refute eternalism, which he takes to go hand in hand with perdurantism.

even if it were to exist. In this connection one thinks of William James's example of twelve men, each concentrating on a different word. No matter how closely the men huddle together, "nowhere will there be a consciousness of the whole sentence." As James says, "the private minds do not agglomerate into a higher compound mind."[18]

Lewis does not offer an explicit argument against the possible existence of a "higher compound mind" spanning the whole life of A. Instead, he appears to rely on a brute intuition that such a thing could not exist, together with the observation that a single, changeless experience encompassing many decades is something we cannot even fathom.[19] It might also be added that the existence of a "higher compound mind" seems superfluous, as it would over-determine the actions performed by A's temporal parts, that its existence would force the admission of some very exotic entities into the moral community, and that invoking such a mind to avoid the consequences of the Blame Argument would likely amount to an *ad hoc* rescue. In any event, since no perdurantist has suggested that four-dimensional objects are the loci of conscious experience, Lewis and James are probably on firm footing. It seems safe to conclude that any conscious experiences that A has are had derivatively, which is to say, in virtue of the experiences of its individual parts.

What about premise (5)? This premise assumes that the following *Consciousness Principle* is embedded in our ordinary conceptual framework:

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[18] James (1890: 160).

[19] Of course, it is probably hasty to conclude that such an experience is utterly impossible – perhaps a creature with an entirely different physical constitution from our own could have one. Also, no theist sympathetic to eternalism would wish to preclude the possibility that God experiences all of history as what Boethius calls an "eternal now."

CP It is never justifiable to blame a person or thing that is not a conscious agent.

As with IP, the importance of CP to ordinary moral reasoning can be seen by reflecting upon circumstances that are widely considered exculpating. Consider, for example, the requirement, assumed in both the courtroom and in ordinary contexts, that someone should not be held responsible who has no appreciation of the wrongful character of his actions. Appreciation is, among other things, a kind of consciousness, an awareness of certain qualities or relations. In fact, consciousness is a necessary condition not only of appreciation, but also of self-awareness, deliberation between alternatives, factual and normative evaluations, and virtually every other commonly recognized aspect of moral agency. This would help explain why, for instance, we do not attribute responsibility to inanimate objects. Lacking conscious awareness, they are not even candidates for the moral community. CP cannot be denied, then, without major revisions to the ways we think about blame. As it says in (5), if blame can justifiably be attributed to something that is not conscious, then a substantial revision to our ordinary conceptual framework is entailed.

However, at least one critic contemplates the possibility that CP is false. Responding to Lewis's claim that it makes little sense to hold an unconscious being responsible, Neal Tognazzini suggests a strategy for perdurantists who might wish to grasp the second horn of my dilemma. (Note that, in Tognazzini's terminology, "perdurantism" does not include the stage view, though the difference is immaterial in the present connection.) He writes,

> [P]erdurantists think that all continuants are four-dimensional objects. So, if perdurance is true, then we *do* attribute moral responsibility to four-dimensional objects since we attribute moral responsibility to persons and persons are four-dimensional objects…Given perdurance, it makes perfect sense to attribute moral responsibility to a four-dimensional object – we do it all the time.[20]

Yes, and given atheism, perhaps it makes perfect sense to talk to God – people do it all the time. As Quine famously pointed out, any two claims can be affirmed together, so long as one is willing to make drastic enough revisions elsewhere in his conceptual scheme.[21] The important question is whether we can attribute moral responsibility to four-dimensional objects without making drastic revisions somewhere else. Lewis's point is not that, as Tognazzini suggest earlier in the same paragraph, it is "just weird" to attribute responsibility to a four-dimensional object – though it is that. His point is that the conceptual cost of doing so would be far too steep, given that four-dimensional objects are not even candidates for conscious experience. Tognazzini offers no reason to question this claim. Of course, it is not even my purpose here to join Lewis in defending CP, but simply to show that CP is embedded in our ordinary conceptual framework. This latter point seems unassailable and appears not to have been challenged by Tognazzini or anyone else.

It seems, then, that each premise of the Blame Argument is on secure footing. If A-at-t_1 is the proper performer of crime *c*, then we blame someone or something numerically distinct from the proper performer, and if all-of-A is the proper performer, then we blame something that is not conscious. Either way, given that our attribution

[20] Tognazzini (2006). Emphasis his.
[21] Quine (1951).

of blame is justified, we run afoul of our ordinary conceptual framework. The only remaining alternative for the critic of the argument is to question the argument's starting assumptions. Recall the set-up:

> Suppose that an agent A commits a crime *c* at time t_1. Suppose, further, that, at a substantially later time t_2, A is blamed for *c*. Finally, suppose that the blame is merited: A really deserves to be blamed for *c*.

I have already addressed the assumption that A is actually blamed for *c*. As I noted above, this assumption is dispensable, included only for ease of exposition. I have also addressed the assumption that A receives the blame at t_2, after the crime was committed. This can only be denied at the expense of IA, since in many perfectly ordinary cases, trans-temporal identity is attributed to persons, and in fact, many a non-negligible class of ordinary attributions of blame are based on such identity attributions. This only leaves the assumption that the blame for *c* is in fact merited. Could the perdurantist complain that I have stacked the deck in favor of my argument by stipulating that A merited the blame for *c*? Maybe A does not deserve to be blamed at all, in which case I have not succeeded in showing that perdurantism is in tension with common sense. Unfortunately, such an objection would be misguided, because it fails to take notice of something else I noted at the outset, which is that the particulars of the situation are of little importance. As I pointed out, crime *c* could be high treason or the knocking over of a liquor store. Thus my "example" is really an example-schema, where the values for A, *c*, t_1, and t_2 can be filled in any way one likes. Surely some past crime – the Manson murders come to mind – is the subject of a justified attribution of blame. The only way to avoid this suggestion is to deny the objectivity of

morality altogether, which is precluded by (RR). This is not to say that the arguments for the various forms of moral anti-realism are not worth considering, but only to say that I need not consider them here, as the present essay does not assume that (RR) is true. The Blame Argument is meant merely to draw out one consequence of (RR) that could prove problematic for the eternalist.

3.2 Endurance and Eternalism

As noted above, it is widely held that eternalism and perdurantism are a "package deal." If so, then my defense of eternalism faces a serious challenge, since I have just finished arguing that perdurantism and real responsibility cannot be affirmed in conjunction without entailing significant revisions elsewhere to our ordinary conceptual scheme. This is a good place to point out that I have not offered a positive argument *for* endurantism. I have merely offered an argument *against* perdurantism, and this argument is persuasive only to the extent that (RR) is taken to be inviolable. The Blame Argument is best viewed as one weapon in the endurantist's arsenal, but this weapon is not, by itself, sufficient to defeat perdurantism. Sider has developed three original arguments against endurantism,[22] and many perdurantists, Sider included, put a great deal of stock in the argument from coincidence, which is supposed to show that various puzzles relating to material constitution are best

[22] These are the argument from exotica, the argument from spacetime, and the argument from vagueness. See Sider (2001: 98-139).

resolved by positing four-dimensional objects.[23] Fortunately for me, there is no question that perdurantism comports well with eternalism, and so nothing in this essay depends on the decisive defeat of perdurantism. What I have been at pains to show, rather, is that perdurantism has some clear disadvantages for someone working under the constraints of my project. The Blame Argument shows that anyone with a commitment to (RR) has, at minimum, a strong *prima facie* reason to embrace endurantism. Consequently, it must be shown that endurantism fits naturally with eternalism.

Let me start by noting that developed objections to endurantism-eternalism are scarce in the literature. One exception appears at first glance to be E.J. Lowe, who writes in Chapter 4 of *The Possibility of Metaphysics*,

> It is widely assumed – often without much argument – that the tensed view of time [i.e. presentism] goes naturally with an endurance account of persistence while the tenseless view [i.e. eternalism] goes naturally with a perdurance account. One of my main aims in this chapter will be to show that…the assumption is indeed correct.[24]

Strangely, however, Lowe only substantiates the first half of the assumption. He devotes many pages to proving the uncontroversial claim that eternalism, and not the presentist temporalism which he espouses, treats time as "a dimension of reality, relevantly akin to the three dimensions of space,"[25] and many more pages to the only slightly less uncontroversial claim that, as a consequence, the presentist cannot accept a perdurance account of persons. However, an argument for the corresponding claim

[23] Heller (1984), among others, defends such an argument. Rea (1997) is an outstanding collection of articles on material constitution issues.
[24] Lowe (2001: 85).
[25] Ibid., 102.

that the eternalist cannot accept an endurance account is conspicuous by its absence. Despite what Lowe says in the quoted passage and elsewhere, he apparently sees no need even to hint at a reason for holding that perdurantism follows from eternalism. His blind-spot can be seen in the following passage:

> My claim, then, is that any 'betweenness' relation relevantly akin to that relating points on a line is a relation between items which is some sense must coexist – but that the tensed theorist allows no such sense for events separated in time. And this is why I conclude that the tenseless theory alone treats time as a dimension of reality in which things are extended, and accordingly treats persisting objects as having temporal parts.[26]

The word "accordingly" in the last sentence cannot bear the weight that Lowe places on it. In his book there is scarcely even a mention of eternalism after the passage just quoted. It is telling that as thorough a philosopher as Lowe should fail to offer anything resembling an argument for the incompatibility of eternalism and endurantism, especially when he has explicitly promised to do so. Since Lowe's silence on the matter is to a large extent representative of the state of the field, much of what follows is, with an important exception, my own attempt to reconstruct the most promising lines of argument open to critics of endurantism-eternalism.

The first argument is aesthetic: it seems somehow more elegant to affirm a "block" theory across the board, i.e. a theory in which both the universe as a whole and the constituents of the universe are treated as four-dimensional objects. But in what sense is such a view more elegant than the alternative? Is elegance is a matter of parsimony? If so, then it must be pointed out that not even perdurantists can do

[26] Ibid., 104.

without three-dimensional objects, since these are, for them, the basic building blocks of the four-dimensional objects that populate the world. No one has proposed that the universe is composed solely of four-dimensional objects. Thus endurantism-eternalism is no less parsimonious than perdurantism-eternalism, as both claim that the four-dimensional universe contains three-dimensional objects. Perhaps the claim, then, is that it is somehow more pleasing, due to the aesthetic appeal of things that are balanced or symmetrical, that the structure of a whole be mirrored in the structure of its internal parts. Thus perhaps it is somehow more pleasing that a block universe contain block objects. But this suggestion is as misguided as the first, because the thesis of endurantism, even when joined to eternalism, need not be taken to suggest that four-dimensional objects are absent from the world altogether. It may be that *persons* are enduring entities, but, given sufficient motivation, one could certainly hold that, say, inanimate objects are perduring entities. Furthermore, if one holds that events are objects in their own right, then it would seem virtually certain that the universe includes perduring entities, since events like battles, plays, and lives last longer than an instant. In other words, nothing precludes the mirroring of the four-dimensional structure of the universe in the structure of many of its constituents, and there may even been good reason to suppose that the universe is this way. I conclude that there is nothing particularly inelegant about endurantism-eternalism.

A second argument against endurantism-eternalism trades on the spatialization of time suggested by

(E1) Every past, present and future time exists.

If a person can be located at two times, t_1 and t_2, and if both t_1 and t_2, timelessly exist, then it would seem that a person can be located in two places, which seems absurd. This argument thus attempts to pit the commitments of the endurantist-eternalist against the following thesis, which the critic takes to be both plausible on its face and embedded firmly in our ordinary conceptual framework:

S A single thing cannot be wholly located at more than one distinct spatial location.

The critic concludes that endurantism-eternalism cannot be affirmed without very significant conceptual costs.

There are two problems with this argument. First, S is not adequately formulated – indeed, given that things often move from one location to another, S is quite clearly false. The plausible belief that the critic is groping around for is

S' A single thing cannot be wholly located at more than one distinct spatial location at a single time.

which is far different from the claim that a single thing cannot be wholly located at more than one spatial location, full stop. One does not normally think that a thing cannot be in two locations, but only that it cannot be in two locations *at once*. But the latter claim creates no problem for the endurantist who affirms (E1). Is there any stronger claim than S' that the critic could cite? Perhaps he could try

S'' A single thing cannot be wholly located in more than one distinct spatio-temporal location.

This claim has the distinct advantage of favoring the critic's position – so distinct, in fact, that it would beg the question in favor of it by making endurantism-eternalism

false by definition. Furthermore, while S'' might have a certain appeal, it does not have the obvious ring of truth shared by S'. In order to make his case against the endurantist-eternalist, the critic has had to depart from the seemingly plausible claim that he started with. It seems no mean task to find a replacement for S that helps the critic's case.

But suppose we waive this concern and accept a promissory note for a suitable replacement for S, that is, for some claim about spatial location that is both intuitively plausible and problematic for endurantism-eternalism. Even granting that there is such a claim, the problem can be fixed quite easily by saying that, while time is space-like in any number of ways, it is not a literal dimension of space. After all, while relativity theory, one of the main motivations for contemporary versions of eternalism, implies a certain kind of unity between space and time – a unity expressed in the phrase "spacetime" – it does not imply an identity between them. To be sure, there are the famous words of Hermann Minkowski, who proclaimed in 1908 that "space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows."[27] And there certainly is in the popular imagination, or at least the imagination of those who consume science fiction novels, a notion that time is really nothing more than a dimension of spatial extension and that the distinction commonly made between time and space is predicated on pure illusion. Nevertheless, it is now commonly recognized among scientists and philosophers that, despite the strange fact that space separations and time separations between events can be expressed as single intervals, time cannot simply be

[27] Minkowski (1952: 75).

reduced to space (or vice versa). A standard textbook on special relativity puts the matter very clearly:

> It is wrong to say that time is identical in quality with space. The invariance of the spacetime interval evidences the unity of space and time while also preserving…the distinction between the two.[28]

The eternalist thus says nothing controversial when he grants that time is space-like in certain important ways while also denying that time is literally a dimension of space.

Of course, the critic might concede that the endurantist-eternalist is within his rights in invoking a real distinction between time and space, but then assert that the endurantist-eternalist still has no principled basis for asserting that a single object could exist at two temporal locations at once. For if time and space, despite being distinct, have many important similarities, perhaps it is *ad hoc* to exclude from these similarities the applicability of the common intuition the critic tried to express with S. In other words, if time is like space in one set of respects and unlike space in another set of respects, what reason is there to suppose that the impossibility of bi-location belongs in the second set rather than the first? My answer is that the claim that the same person can be located at two different times is not merely a stipulation posited to make the theory come out right. Rather, it is a perfectly pedestrian observation that anyone must grant, regardless of one's other theoretical motivations. Naturally, endurantists and perdurantists interpret this observation differently, with endurantists saying that a person can be *wholly* present at two times and perdurantists saying that a

[28] Taylor and Wheeler (1992: 18). The unity of space and time is reflected in the following formula: $(\text{interval})^2 = (\text{time separation})^2 - (\text{space separation})^2 = t^2 - x^2$. As the authors explain, the minus sign in this formula "distinguishes between space and time. No twisting or turning can ever give the same sign to real space and time separations in the expression for the interval."

person can only be *partly* present at two times. But the observation is there just the same. The mere fact that endurantism entails its truth should not count against the theory, since it is an observation that any theory must come to terms with. There is nothing suspect about the endurantist-eternalist's appeal to the disanalogy between time and space in the present context, even if he appeals to their analogy in others. I conclude that any attempt to press an intuition in the neighborhood of S against endurantism-eternalism is bound to fail, as it can only rest on an exaggerated analogy between time and space.

The final objection that I shall consider is one that has actually been widely discussed. The "problem of temporary intrinsics," formulated by David Lewis,[29] takes the hoary old problem of change and transforms it into an argument for perdurantism. Lewis calls the argument "the principal and decisive objection against endurance,"[30] and Sider also accords substantial weight to it, though he stops short of calling the argument decisive.[31] Though framed as a general argument against endurantism, we will see that the argument from temporary intrinsics appears to create special problems for endurantism-eternalism.

Lewis's canonical statement of the argument is highly compressed, but it can be reconstructed as follows. Suppose I am standing and have a straight shape, but then I sit down and acquire a bent shape. It seems to follow that both straightness and bentness can be predicated of me, that is,

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[29] David Lewis (1986: 202-204).
[30] Ibid., 202.
[31] Sider (2001: 92ff). Sider ranks the argument as sixth in his list of ten arguments for perdurantism, which he arranges "roughly in order of increasing plausibility-to-me" (p. 74).

(1) I am straight and bent.

But this seems impossible, given that the obvious fact that

(2) Straightness and bentness are incompatible properties.

As Lewis points out, the obvious response here is to point out that I am not straight and bent *at the same time*, and so there is no incompatibility, after all. This is an instance of the intuitive generalization

(3) If anything instantiates incompatible properties, it instantiates each at a different time.

which, taken together with (1) and (2), implies that

(4) I am straight at one time and bent at another time.

However, Lewis emphasizes that it makes a difference to our metaphysics how sentences like (4) get cashed out. The compatibility issue is not resolved merely by observing "how very commonplace and indubitable it is" that objects change their properties over time. This observation – Sider refers to it as the "glib response" – is no doubt quite common, but there are several substantially different ways in which it can be interpreted. This is where things get delicate.

Lewis considers two possible interpretations before offering his own. The first and perhaps most obvious strategy for understanding (4) – call it "relationism" – is to build references to times into our descriptions of change. The relationist might analyze (4) along the following lines:

(4_R) There are distinct times t and t' such that I am straight at t and I am bent at t'.

But this solution is unacceptable, according to Lewis, since it amounts to a denial that an object's shape (not to mention its color, size, etc.) is an intrinsic property, treating it instead as a two-place relation between an object and a time. That is, the relationist proposal seems to entail that we cannot simply say that I am straight and leave it at that; I can only be straight in relation to a time. Lewis considers it perfectly obvious that shape is a genuine monadic property and thus dismisses relationism as "simply incredible."

Second, that one might appeal to what I have called "abstract presentism," which substitutes abstract representations in place of concrete past and future times. On this proposal, I do not literally instantiate both the properties of straightness and bentness, though I might be straight and *represented* as bent by some ersatz time, or vice versa. Thus (4) can be analyzed as

> (4_{AP}) I am straight and there is an ersatz time *e* that represents me as bent or I am bent and there is an ersatz time *e* that represents me as straight or there are distinct ersatz times *e* and *e′* such that I am straight at *e* and bent at *e′*.

But Lewis dismisses this solution as even more outrageous than the previous one, since, he says, it in effect denies persistence altogether. That is, presentism denies that a single object can exist at two distinct times, and thus "goes against what we all believe."

Finally, one might account for change by appealing to perdurantism, which, as we know, treats persisting things as composed of temporal parts. Thus we might understand (4) to say

(4_P) There are distinct temporal parts of me *y* and *z* such that *y* is straight and *z* is bent.

Since, on this proposal, the incompatible properties are instantiated by numerically distinct objects – distinct temporal parts of me – the problem dissolves. This, of course, is Lewis's preferred solution.

Lewis presents us with a trilemma: we can interpret (4) in the perdurantist way expressed by (4_P), the presentist way expressed by (4_{AP}), or the relationist way expressed by (4_R). Inasmuch as the presentist solution is, for obvious reasons, not available to the eternalist, the argument can be treated as a dilemma for eternalists:[32] either one must adopt perdurantism and be saddled with the problems I identified in Section 3.1, or adopt endurantism and embrace a view that Lewis calls "simply incredible." Of course, one notorious problem with his argument is that it leaves out various alternatives. For instance, one could adopt a modified version of what I have called "temporal realism," which would deny tenseless predication altogether and make absolute distinctions between past, present and future predications of properties such as straightness and bentness.[33] As with presentism, this solution is not available to me. An alternative solution that is open to the eternalist is the adverbial solution, which builds relations to times into the instantiations of properties, so that, for instance, I might have-at-*t* the property of being straight and have-at-*t′* the property of being bent.[34] Other solutions may be possible as well.[35] However, I shall focus

[32] It is also a dilemma for most temporal realists, who also accept (E1).
[33] Sider (2001: 94-95) discusses, and rebuts, something like modified temporal realism.
[34] This solution is advanced by Johnston (1987) and Lowe (1987). David Lewis (1999) addresses the adverbial solution.

attention on the standard relationist solution, which, contrary to what Lewis claims, I take to provide a straightforward and plausible way to read sentences such as (4). The relationist view already has able defenders,[36] but what has not yet been articulated with sufficient care, in my view, is the degree to which this solution fits ordinary intuitions about change and predication. Indeed, inasmuch as the relationist solution, in Sider's words, "elevates…the glib response into serious metaphysics,"[37] I maintain that it fits more naturally with our intuitions than the absolutist view preferred by perdurantists.

In arguing for his preference for perdurantism, the only motivation that Lewis cites is intuition. In particular, he takes as controlling the ordinary judgment that things change over time, or, in Lewisian language, that

L Persisting objects have intrinsic properties temporarily.

This statement can be analyzed into three components:

L1 There are persisting objects.

L2 Persisting objects have intrinsic properties.

L3 Intrinsic properties are sometimes had temporarily.

Lewis rejects presentism because it denies the literal truth of L1, and he rejects relationism because it denies the literal truth of L2. Should he not also reject perdurantism on the grounds that it denies the literal truth of L3? The judgment that a single thing can be (for instance) straight and then bent seems every bit as well-

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[35] See Koons (2000: 244) for a useful typology (due to Peter Simons) and discussion of approaches to temporal predication. Koons's own solution involves appealing to situation-types (such as my being straight) tokened at times.
[36] See Wasserman (2003), MacBride (2001) and van Inwagen (1990a).
[37] Sider (2001: 93).

founded as the judgments that shape is intrinsic and that objects persist over time – indeed, L3 expresses the very judgment that gives rise to the problem Lewis is addressing. But perdurantism implies that no single thing can literally be straight and then bent, since every object has all of its qualities at every moment of its existence. If the sentiment embodied in L is to be our standard, then the consequences of perdurantism seem at least as counter-intuitive as those Lewis cites for relationism and presentism.

The perdurantist will naturally reply that his theory *does* allow for an object to have temporary properties, and that it accounts for this fact by treating temporary properties as the properties of the object's temporal parts. According to perdurantism, the parts may not themselves have properties temporarily, but, in virtue of their having them permanently, the whole perduring object is rightly said to have them temporarily. This is a fine solution, but it must be pointed out that the defender of an opposing theory can easily employ a similar strategy, the presentist proposing an account of persistence that satisfies his ontology and the relationist proposing an account of intrinsicality that satisfies his. It is not that Lewis does not have a story to tell to make his theory fit our intuitions about change – it certainly does – but only that his theory is scarcely better off with respect to the putatively basic intuitions encapsulated in L than the alternatives. Lewis, then, faces a dilemma of his own: If he insists on taking the intuitions captured by L to be sacrosanct, then his argument for perdurantism is undermined every bit as much as the other solutions. But if he allows us to "spin" our ordinary intuitions to fit our metaphysics, then it is far from clear that perdurantism

comes out ahead. I am not arguing, as some have,[38] that perdurantism precludes the possibility of real change – it does allow for change, if we permit him to define change in a way that is friendly to his theory – but that his account does not hew any more closely to ordinary intuition that relationism.

Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that relationism fits *better* with ordinary intuition that perdurantism does, as relationism requires hardly any "spinning" at all. Lewis's rejection of relationism assumes that it is sensible to speak of a thing's being straight or bent without qualification. However, I wish to raise two considerations that call this assumption into question. First, as temporalists have conveniently pointed out, tensed verbs are pervasive in natural language. Thus, in most contexts, if I wish to indicate that I am speaking of something occurring at present, there is no need to refer explicitly to the moment at which I speak, since the present tense flags this time automatically. If I say, "I am straight," my hearer surmises that I am asserting that I am straight *now*, and will not conclude that I was not bent before or will not be bent in the future. In other words, since tensed language usually builds in unambiguous implicit references to times, it would often be redundant for speakers to specify times explicitly. Thus, though we typically refrain from mentioning a relation to a time when we predicate a property of an object, there is no reason to conclude from this that we are not operating under the assumption that properties can generally only be predicated of objects with respect to times.

[38] E.g. Oderberg (2004).

Second, in a wide range of cases it clearly can *only* make sense to assert that an object has a certain property at a time, including many cases where no time is explicitly mentioned. Plantinga provides an amusing example in another connection that will serve my purposes:

> In Herbert Spiegelberg's book *The Phenomenological Movement* there are pictures of Franz Brentano at the age of 20 and 70 respectively. The youthful Brentano looks much like Apollo; the elderly Brentano resembles, instead, Jerome Hines in his portrayal of the dying Czar in Boris Godounov.[39]

Among other variations, the young Brentano has a black beard and smooth skin while the elderly Brentano had a gray beard and wrinkled skin. If someone today were to ask whether Brentano was wrinkled, it would be misleading to answer with an unqualified "yes" or "no" unless we knew which time or times interested the inquirer. Before answering, we should look for clarification, either by considering the context or by asking the speaker directly. Is the inquirer asking about the young Brentano or the old Brentano? Perhaps he wants to know about Brentano at the height of his fame? Or perhaps he wonders if Brentano *ever* was wrinkled, or if he *always* was wrinkled? Until we get clear on the question, we cannot give answer without being potentially misleading, because we know that predications of wrinkledness – not to mention straightness, bentness and so on – normally hold at certain times but not at others. Either implicitly or explicitly, our predications frequently – perhaps usually – invoke references to times.

[39] Plantinga (1974: 94).

Relationism, then, may not be as problematic as Lewis thinks; in fact, it seems quite well-supported by natural language. If the aim is to save the appearances – and Lewis and I are agreed that the appearances place an important constraint on our theorizing – then he has not succeeded in showing that the endurantist is any worse off than the perdurantist. If anything, the endurantist is better off in this regard. However, while I have rebutted Lewis's specific concerns, one worry might still remain. It might be objected that the relationist solution collapses the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic properties. Surely, the critic will suggest, it makes sense to say that something can be straight or bent in and of itself. One strategy for coping with this problem has been suggested by Ryan Wasserman:

> I suggest that the relativizer ought to take the dyadic relation of *being bent at* as primitive and to then use that relation in order to say what it is for something to be *bent simpliciter*: *x* is *bent simpliciter* if and only if *x* stands in the dyadic relation of *being bent at* to every time at which it exists.[40]

The idea here is that we should simply reverse the order of logical priority that Lewis and others take for granted, so that straightness and bentness *simpliciter* are to be understood in terms of straightness or bentness at a time, not the other way around. This preserves the insight that makes sense to make unqualified predications of straightness and bentness, while allowing us to avoid the heavy metaphysical commitments involved in the other strategies for interpreting sentences like (4).

[40] Wasserman (2003: 416).

Trenton Merricks asserts, without argument, that the kind of strategy Wasserman proposes "seems to have things backwards,"[41] perhaps because *being bent at* appears to be a term of art, whereas *bent simpliciter* appears to have the sense of ordinary predications of bentness. This judgment prompts Merricks to offer the following as a desideratum to be satisfied by any solution to the problem Lewis raises:

> Any solution to the problem [of temporary intrinsics] should, if it makes use of any properties like 'being *t*ly *F*' or 'being *F* at a time,' analyze these in terms of everyday properties like 'being *F*' simpliciter.[42]

I have offered reason to doubt that Wasserman gets things backwards: we are far more likely to think of predications of wrinkledness, straightness, etc. in connection with times than in the abstract. However, if Merrick's desideratum is to be retained, another possible strategy for coping with sentences like (4) is to claim that "straight" is ambiguous, sometimes expressing *straight-at-some-time* and sometimes expressing *straight at such-and-such a time*, where the latter is analyzed in terms of the former. This proposal would allow us to maintain that, in one real sense of the word, "straight" expresses a monadic, primitive property, while also providing a way to say that something can be "straight" only at a time. This would also capture the intuition that there is a bigger difference between straightness and *being taller than* than the mere number of places in their corresponding predicates. The relationist seems to have ample resources at his disposal to accommodate the critic's worries.

[41] Ibid.
[42] Merricks (1994: 170).

I conclude that the problem Lewis raises is a tempest in a teapot.[43] The force of the argument from temporary intrinsics depends almost entirely on an unwarranted assumption that there is something illicit about building references to times into our predications of ordinary properties. One does not need to embrace either perdurantism or presentism to avoid the problem; one need only show that the relationist view is perfectly consistent with our common sense understanding of things, which is what I have done. The problem of temporary intrinsics poses no threat to endurantism-eternalism.

It is beginning to look as if the case against endurantism-eternalism amounts to little more than a hunch – a hunch that I, for one, do not share and that is not, apparently, backed up by persuasive arguments. At first glance, it might seem that a block theory of persons should accompany a block theory of time, but I contend that this is only because we come to the table with certain mistaken assumptions about what constitutes an elegant theory, or about how far the analogy between time and space is to be taken, or about the precise way to characterize the difference between properties and relations. Careful attention to these issues shows that there is no tension in a theory that maintains the existence of enduring persons in a four-dimensional universe. Obviously, the perdurantist can embrace eternalism – indeed, arguably he must. But I have shown that anyone moved by (RR) to accept endurantism is also free to embrace eternalism. Endurantism can be coupled with eternalism with little conceptual cost.

[43] Cf. Wasserman (2003: 414): "[T]he problem of temporary intrinsics does not, in the end, have a significant role to play in the debate over the nature of persistence."

4. Rationality (I)

> Time is a river, a violent current of events, glimpsed once and already carried past us, and another follows and is gone.
>
> – Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

Nothing could be more natural than to say that time passes. Time flies, we say. Time drags on. Time flows, "like an ever rolling stream." Some suggest that temporal passage underlies other ways of speaking, as well. If we go from saying "it will snow" to "it is snowing" to "it was snowing," does this not bespeak an image of an event that, like the snowstorm itself, drifts towards us, passes through, and recedes again into the distance? Indeed, "past" is just an elided form of "passed." Lying behind such talk, it seems, is

(T) The present is objectively present.

since the movement that we observe seems to be the movement of the present along the timeline. In the next chapter we will consider a powerful but indirect argument for (T): If we do not make judgments of real presentness, then time-sensitive motivations are left unexplained. The argument this chapter considers is more direct. It in effect says, "look – time is passing! You can see it for yourself!" One need only consult his own immediate experience, it seems, to confirm the data: right in front of us a single moment appears with exceptional vividness, and as soon as we can fix our gaze upon it, it is gone, only to be replaced by another, similarly vivid moment. It is the universality of this experience that one counts on when invoking images of passage, movement or flow. When all the metaphor is peeled back, the temporalist says, we are left with what I call *dynamic succession*: the momentary possession of a unique

property of presentness by every time in sequence – what others have called the "moving now."

Does humankind toil under an illusion? As we will see, contemporary eternalists are, as a rule, content to "bite the bullet" on the reliability of our judgments, maintaining their theory by rejecting

(RF) Human persons have *reliable rational faculties*, that is, they are not systematically misled about important features of the world.

But as we know, the option of denying (RF) is not available to someone working under my constraints. My defense of eternalism requires that I account for the "violent current of events" felt in common experience, and to do so in a way that preserves the general reliability of our judgments, including our temporal ones. This chapter and the next one should be viewed together as providing an argument for the claim that, contrary to the claims of temporalists, eternalism poses no threat to the idea that our rational faculties, experiential or otherwise, are trustworthy guides to reality.

4.1 The "Myth of Passage"

Before developing my account of the experience of temporal passage, it will be useful to consider a widely discussed argument against the temporalist treatment of passage. In a classic article, Donald C. Williams argues that the whole idea of temporal passage is a myth, a confused and misleading relic of a romantic image of the world.[1] Williams opens with an evocative statement of his preferred "theory of the manifold" – that is,

[1] Williams (1951).

eternalism – with each person "enjoying a little foreground of the here and now, while around him there looms, thing beyond thing, event beyond event, the plethora of the universe." This is a lovely article, as a work of prose and, in some ways, as a piece of philosophical analysis. Unfortunately, the author's infatuation with eternalism, which he regards as "the very paradigm of philosophic understanding," carries him away, and by the end he is accusing his temporalist opponents of "melt[ing] back into the primitive magma of confusion and plurality the best and sharpest instruments which the mind has forged."[2] Such overblown rhetoric can perhaps be overlooked, especially as his targets are not exactly models of analytic clarity, but other problematic aspects of the paper bear closer scrutiny.

The centerpiece of the paper is its statement of the rate-of-passage argument, due originally to J.J.C. Smart.[3] Actually, there are at least three slightly different rate-of passage arguments, two connected arguments devised by Smart and a third devised by Williams. In his original formulation, Smart suggests that when time is described using the metaphor of a river, this naturally prompts one to ask how quickly the river of time flows. But if we think there is a rate at which time flows, then "we are postulating a second time scale with respect to which the flow of events along the first time-dimension is measured." Naturally we will compare the second time scale to a flowing river, whose movement in turn will require measurement against a third time scale, and so on *ad infinitum*. "Sooner or later we will have to stop thinking of time as a stream," Smart says. The problem is that "we do not see very clearly just how we are

[2] Ibid., 472.
[3] Smart (1949: 484-485).

to stop." Smart's second argument starts with the observation that there is always a sensible answer to the question of how quickly something is moving in space. We may not know the answer in a given instance, but we can be sure that things always move through space at so many units of distance per some unit of time. But when asked how quickly time moves, or how quickly things move in time, the very nature of the answer eludes us. Smart writes,

> We do not even know the sort of units in which our answer should be expressed. "I am advancing through time at how many seconds per–?' we might begin, and then we should have to stop. What could possibly fill in the blank? Not seconds, surely. In that case the most we could hope for would be the not very illuminating remark that there is just one second in every second.

The question, he suggests, turns out to be a "pseudo-question."[4]

One interesting feature of Smart's arguments is their interrelation; in fact, they can be reconstructed as a trilemma composed of two dilemmas: Either the question about the rate of passage is a pseudo-question or a real question. If it is a pseudo-question, it can have no meaningful answer. If it is a real question, then either the answer is to be given with reference to the very timeline being measured or with reference to another timeline. If the answer is to be given with reference to the timeline being measured, the answer will be unilluminating. If the answer is to be given with reference to another timeline, then we are led to an infinite regress. Since none of these three options provides a rationally acceptable account of temporal passage, according to Smart, the notion can have no place in a sound metaphysics.[5]

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[4] Ibid.

[5] After all, if there is no temporal passage, then there is no objective present.

Williams advances a line of argument similar to Smart's, though he develops it in an interestingly different way by explicitly presupposing the truth of eternalism, which he believes to be defensible on scientific grounds. The eternalist picture that he takes for granted provides a ready definition of motion in space as "the presence of the same individual at different places at different times." A corresponding motion in time, he says, "comes out as nothing more dramatic than an exact equivalent: 'motion in time' consists of being at different times in different places." Given these definitions, motion of either kind simply amounts to a change in both spatial and temporal location; there is no motion in one without motion in the other. But if this is what motion *in* space and time is, how are we to understand the supposed movement *of* time itself? The "tragedy" of such a notion is that it demands the existence of another timeline in terms of which the motion of the first is to be understood:

> For as soon as we say that time or the present or we move in the odd extra way which the doctrine of passage requires, we have no recourse but to suppose that this movement in turn takes time of a special sort: $time_1$ move at a certain rate in $time_2$, perhaps one $second_1$ per $second_2$, perhaps slower, perhaps faster.

And so an "unhappy regress" threatens, just as in the final prong of Smart's trilemma.[6] The thrust of Williams's argument relies upon the conviction that eternalism provides an elegant picture of reality with the potential to solve a wide range of philosophical problems[7] – including, among much else, the nature of motion. Given this, and given the intractable difficulties besetting dynamic accounts of temporal movement, Williams suggests that there is little point in trying to work out a temporalist picture of

[6] Williams (1951: 462-464).
[7] See especially ibid., 460, 471-472.

reality.[8] Thus he concludes with Smart that a manful acceptance of the deliverances of science should prompt us to discard the myth of passage and embrace the manifold theory.

It would be convenient for eternalism if the versions of the rate-of-passage argument advanced by either Smart or Williams were sound. But, regrettably, they fail. In the first place, although Smart happens to be right to characterize the question of how quickly time passes as a "pseudo-question," this is not because of any shortcoming in temporalism. For the problem is not merely that no sensible answer to the question suggests itself, but that it is really a complex question along the lines of, "do you still beat your wife?" The question attributes to the temporalist the belief that time moves in some very strong sense of the word, which is wholly unwarranted. Anyone who sets his mind to comprehending the nature of time can sympathize with Augustine's exasperation when he asks, "What is time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this even in thought so as to articulate the answer in words?"[9] Given its elusiveness, it would be astonishing if people did not express their beliefs about time in metaphors. The phenomenology of time lends itself to comparisons with the flowing, rolling, moving, or passing of ordinary objects, but very few of us, it is safe to say, would wish to press the analogy very far. Certainly the sophisticated temporalist is not likely to suggest that time passes or moves in the same sense that a parade, a boat, or an airplane does. The account of spatial movement

[8] See ibid., 471.
[9] Augustine (1991: bk. XI).

proposed by Williams and assumed by Smart, even if true, may not be as illuminating as they think.

In the case of ordinary objects, movement occurs along at least two axes, a spatial axis and a temporal axis. Smart and Williams both rely heavily on a "two axis" requirement, though they are willing to allow that one need not be spatial. But without extending the concept of movement too drastically, surely one could talk meaningfully of a kind of movement along a single axis, without reference to any other. For instance, when looking at a simple graph with x and y coordinates, it would not be inappropriate to say that a straight horizontal line in the graph's upper right quadrant "moves" from left to right along the y axis. At what rate does the line move? Why, at a rate of one unit of distance along the y axis per unit of distance along the y axis. Of course, this answer is not illuminating in the least: one could not use it, for instance, to explain the concept of linear extension to someone who did not already grasp the concept. But the metaphor of movement could nevertheless be useful to those who already understand linear extension. "Notice that the line does not vary as it moves from left to right," we might say, even though there is no second line against which the "movement" of the first line is measured. (If there had to be, wouldn't a regress threaten?) And yet no one would say that the concept of linear extension is incoherent or that it somehow cries out for a fuller explanation. It is hard to see why the temporal dimension should be regarded differently. As Prior rightly says in reply to the

argument, "events become more past at the rate of a year per year, an hour per hour, a second per second."[10]

It will immediately be objected that my analogy fits perfectly with eternalism – so perfectly, in fact, that similar examples are frequently cited to explicate the eternalist notion of temporal extension. Recall the notion of time as a "fourth dimension of space." Does my example even help the temporalist? I maintain that it does, for the following reason: A line on a page has two qualities relevant to the eternalist notion of temporal extension, the first being its static character, with every part of the line existing all at once, the second being the applicability to it of the concept of movement I proposed above. Clearly, the second quality does not depend on the first, as we could apply the same concept of movement to a line that is presently being drawn across a piece of paper. We could even apply it to a bold line that is being traced over a faint dotted line, or a line that is being erased almost as quickly as it is being drawn. In each of these examples – analogous to the growing block theory, the moving spotlight theory, and presentism, respectively – the concept of linear movement is just as applicable as in the case of the static line. One understands what it is for the line to "move" from left to right regardless of whether the whole line exists at once. My initial example manifests no bias against dynamic succession.

So much for the objection that my analogy is too strong. But it could also be objected that the analogy is too weak. The defender of the rate-of-passage argument could try to point out that the line on the graph, unlike the timeline, has no natural

[10] Prior (2003a: 7).

direction, so that it would be no less appropriate to say that the line moves from right to left than that it moves from left to right. This objection misses its mark, however, since the line on the graph does in fact have a direction, with points expressing greater magnitudes the farther they are to the right. One *could* say that our line in the upper right quadrant moves from right to left rather than left to right, but this would only be appropriate if we were interested in smaller magnitudes or proximity to the zero point – in which case it would be misleading to say that the line moves in the *other* direction. In the same way, the temporalist could say that time runs from past to future, since the temporalist is likely interested in the successive closing of possibilities, but if he were interested in, say, the successive arrival of once-future events, he could as easily say that time runs from future to past.[11] Either way, the attribution of a direction of the timeline is determined by considering the timeline's objective characteristics in light of our interests. The purported disanalogy evaporates.

Once Smart's question is properly disambiguated, the answer can be seen to be unproblematic, if boring: time passes at a rate of one second per second. Just as a line's "movement" is measured by the line itself – as opposed to some second scale, as Williams's conception of movement would have it – so is time's "movement" simply measured with reference to the timeline. (The same point applies *mutatis mutandis* to individuals moving through time; they move through time at a rate of one second per second.) No second axis is required to measure temporal movement, and so the

[11] Williams actually records an observation that is instructive in this connection, though he does not notice its significance: "Augustine pictures the present passing into the past, where the modern pictures the present as invading the future" (p. 462).

threatened regress never arises. If there is a problem with the temporalist's "odd extra" notion of a "moving now" – which of course is the real target of the argument – it is not due to any difficulty with the notion of temporal movement *per se*.

4.2 Saving the Appearances

One might surmise that the failure of the rate-of-passage argument calls into question my rejection of dynamic succession. But this is not true, since my defense of eternalism does not depend on any attempt to show that temporalist concepts are beset with difficulties, but merely requires that eternalism be at least on a par with temporalism with respect to the robust theory of persons. The unsoundness of the rate-of-passage argument actually works to my advantage in this regard, since, unlike Williams and Smart, I aim to preserve a real sense in which we can be said to experience temporal passage. Consider Ned Markosian's proposed *passage thesis*:

> Time is unlike the dimensions of space in at least this one respect: there are some properties possessed by time, but not possessed by any dimension of space, in virtue of which it is true to say that time passes.[12]

Markosian gives his own reply to the rate-of-passage argument, and proposes a temporalist account of passage that satisfies the thesis. I shall raise no objection to the conclusion of his paper, which is that dynamic succession (he calls it "pure passage") is perfectly coherent. But I wish to point out that eternalism can satisfy the passage thesis, as well, because, as emphasized Chapters 2 and 3, it recognizes that normal instances of causation occur along the temporal axis of the manifold and not along any

[12] Markosian (1993: 830).

of its spatial axes. Additionally, if the endurantist is to be believed, time is the dimension along which a single individual can wholly exist at multiple locations. The question before us, then, is not whether the eternalist cannot affirm a kind of temporal passage, but whether he can tell a story about the experience of passage that "saves the appearances" just as well as the stories told by Markosian and others.

But how can eternalism possibly save the appearances? It is almost universally thought that in denying that time has a dynamic quality, eternalists must regard the experience of passage as a delusion. Ian Dunbar expresses the temporalist's worry when he writes,

> The basis of the belief in A-theory is that time, and the passage of time, are such intimate elements of experience that if we were wrong about them we could not use our experience as evidence for anything.[13]

William Lane Craig brings out the point even more forcefully when he says,

> If the experience of temporal becoming is an illusion, if in reality there is no such thing as temporal becoming, then it is hard to imagine what is left to us about which we should not be skeptical.[14]

In other words, Dunbar and Craig are so convinced of the fundamentality of the experience of temporal passage that they think its veridicality cannot be denied without consigning us to skepticism.

Eternalists also acknowledge the pervasiveness of passage in common experience, and frequently treat it as being in tension with their theory. Hans Reichenbach writes:

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[13] Dunbar (2001: Sec. 5).
[14] Craig (2003a: 160). Consider also his very strong earlier statement that "It can truly be said that anyone who succeeded in ridding himself completely of tensed beliefs and the emotions appertaining thereto would have ceased to be human" (p. 149).

> Scientific analysis has led to an interpretation of time very different from the experience of time in everyday life. What we feel as the flow of time has been revealed to be identical to the causal process that constitutes this world.[15]

Adolf Grünbaum, also a staunch eternalist, likewise pits scientific analysis against common experience, contending that the eternalist account of temporal determination

> is *not* an analysis of what the commonsense man actually *means* when he says that a physical event belongs to the present, past, or future; instead, such an account sets forth how these ascriptions ought to be construed within the framework of a theory which would supplant the scientifically untutored view of commonsense.[16]

For Reichenbach and Grünbaum, eternalism provides a replacement for the deliverances of common experience, not an amplification or disambiguation of them or even an addendum to them. The supposed conflict between eternalism and experience is stated very forthrightly by Oaklander, who expresses a consensus on this matter:

> Do events really pass from the future to the present and into the past, as A-theorists such as C.D. Broad, George Schlesinger, Quentin Smith, Storrs McCall, Michael Tooley, William Lane Craig, and others have maintained, or is the passage of time a myth and an illusion, as B-theorists such as Bertrand Russell, Donald C. Williams, Adolf Grünbaum, J.J.C. Smart, L. Nathan Oaklander, Robin Le Poidevin, Hugh Mellor, Heather Dyke, and others have maintained?[17]

All of this presents a serious challenge to my project: If these assorted figures are right that eternalism departs dramatically from the conception of time very naturally gathered from ordinary experience, then the eternalist cannot maintain that our experience of time is reliable.

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[15] Reichenbach (1951: 155).
[16] Grünbaum (1967: 8).
[17] Oaklander (2003: 265).

I aim to show that they are mistaken. Before sketching my account of temporal experience, however, it is necessary to discuss further the epistemic standard that I am trying to meet. (RF) asserts that human beings are not systematically misled about important features of the world. In other words, while anyone might make any number of mistakes about what the world is like, and while some might have cognitive limitations that ensure that their experience of the world is wholly unreliable, such mistakes and limitations are not *systematic*, by which I mean that they do not result either from some inherent limitation in how we, as human beings, experience the world or from some strange, unperceived situation, like being brains in vats, that would radically disconnect human beings from the world as it actually is. (RF) might fruitfully be compared to Lincoln's famous dictum: "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time." (RF) is really an anti-skeptical hypothesis, a sharpening of the defeasible deference to folk ontology discussed in Chapter 1. (RF) claims that, however often various individuals might be fooled about this or that aspect of their world, their collective wisdom about it is more or less on target.

Of course, one way to try to resolve the tension between eternalism and experience might be to qualify or weaken (RF) in some way. After all, many would argue that it is, at a bare minimum, an overstatement to suggest that every fundamental feature of the world is pretty much as we experience it – especially if, as some might claim, a proper understanding of the nature of time is not the sort of thing that contributes to our survival. The trouble with weakening (RF) is that the strong version

outlined in the previous paragraph is arguably a consequence of several well-established positions in epistemology. A paradigmatic example is reliabilism, which states that the key factor distinguishing genuine knowledge from mere belief is the presence of a reliable link between the knower and what is known. There are many variations on the reliabilist theme, but what all theories of this sort have in common is the view that the right kind of connection to the world is necessary for knowledge. Such theories leave little room for the whole human race to be misled about a basic feature of reality – indeed, one of their motivations is to answer skepticism while avoiding the pitfalls besetting theories that focus on the internal condition of the knower. However, none of this is to say that (RF) is alien to these other theories. For instance, the principle of phenomenal conservatism and the principle of credulity, both employed by internalist theories of justification, suggest in different ways that we should accept that things are as they seem to us unless we have a strong reason to believe otherwise. As with reliabilism and other forms of externalism, the theories that employ these principles are committed to the general reliability of our belief-forming faculties, if on different grounds. Given this consensus among divergent epistemologies, it is clear that I must contend with (RF) as originally presented.

Let me begin by pointing out the crucial, if perhaps obvious, distinction between the experience of passage and the reality (putatively) experienced. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, everyone agrees that our mental life is pervaded by a feeling that is easy to characterize in terms of passage, movement or

flow – what C.I. Lewis called "the jerky and whooshy quality of transience."[18] Hereafter I shall use *the experience of temporal passage*, or more simply, *temporal experience*, to designate the feeling that events and times continuously seem in some sense to arrive and depart again (or, alternatively, that we seem to arrive at and depart from events and times). In considering temporal experience, it is important not to confuse it with whatever it is, if anything, that it is an experience of. I maintain that the object of temporal experience is, as I shall hereafter use the expression, *the passage of time*, or more simply, *passage*. Some eternalists, as we have seen, reject passage altogether, but I have shown it to be a coherent notion. In what follows, I shall show that eternalism can do justice to passage itself and to the character of our experience. I take it that, in order for my account to succeed, it must say what the three aspects of temporal experiences are experiences of, how they fit together with one another, and what role they play in our mental life.

A precise analysis of the peculiar quality of temporal experience is bound to be elusive, but three prominent features stand out. The first and most important is what I call the *now-experience*, which includes, at a minimum, a certain distinctive way that things at the present are experienced. The second, which seems to depend on the first, is the *flow-experience*, that is, the sense of continuous change in the quality of our experience. This is really the experience of passage proper. The third, which seems tied to the second, is the *direction-experience*, which is our sense of orientation towards the future. These qualities occur together in our mental life, though they are, I

[18] Quoted in Falk (2003: 215).

think, conceptually distinguishable.[19] I make no attempt to defend either the existence of temporal experience or its having the aspects just mentioned, except to note that doubters can confirm what I say by consulting their own conscious states.[20]

First, let us consider the now-experience, which temporalists typically identify, I think rightly, as the most fundamental feature of temporal experience. Just to have an example in view, consider my present conscious state. I now have visual, tactile, and auditory experiences of what seems to be my typing on a keyboard; I sense a certain coolness seemingly emanating from a ceiling fan above my head; I have an apparent awareness of furniture and other objects in my physical environment; I feel a certain serene satisfaction in contemplating philosophy; I am conscious of various memories, expectations, mental images, fragments of commercial jingles; and so on – this is just the beginning, of course. All of these present experiences display a certain vividness; they are right there in my mental space, so to speak. By contrast, yesterday's experiences are not in my mental space at all, at least not in the way that my present experiences are. Yesterday seems remote, almost ethereal, and it is only known to me now through the mediation of my present experiences. Why does experience – and the world experienced – come to me this way?

The first thing to observe is that I am apparently unable to experience the world in any other way. In Chapter 3 we contemplated the possibility of a being that could have a single experience of a stretch of time spanning its whole existence. Perhaps I

[19] Cf. Craig's (2003a: ch. 5) distinction between the "experience of the present," the "experience of temporal becoming," and "our differential experience of the Past and Future."
[20] This is not to say that we are always aware of the experience of passage (far from it), but only that we can become aware of it if we pay attention.

should not foreclose the possibility of such a being altogether, but there is no avoiding the fact *I* am stuck having experiences sequentially, and so does everyone else that is likely to read this essay. Thus we should take the fact that we experience things in succession to be part of the data, i.e. as something to be explained, not argued for. Let me also mention that I do not wish to rule out what James famously calls the "specious present." James writes,

> We are constantly aware of a certain duration – the specious present – varying from a few seconds to probably not more than a minute, and this duration (with its content perceived as having one part earlier and another part later) is the original intuition of time.[21]

Even though Chapter 1 defines times as infinitesimal, there is no reason that, even for creatures with our constitution, a single *experience* could not encompass many times so conceived. Indeed, it may be that each experience *must* encompass a small interval of non-zero duration. For the purposes of this chapter, then, let us extend the conception of a time and say that it is the set of events simultaneous with one's (real or actual) specious present.[22] (Times in this sense are composed of times in the sense specified in Chapter 1.) By putting things this way, it allows for a time to have a "thickness" corresponding to the thickness of an experience.[23] None of this is a threat to the eternalist – indeed, if James's observation creates difficulties for anyone, it is

[21] James (1890: 642).
[22] Compare the definition in Russell (1915).
[23] This extended definition of times can easily be inserted into an amended characterization of endurantism, which would become the thesis that a single person is wholly present at every time that is an object of a single experience of his. Since no person's experience spans, say, a decade, the second horn of the dilemma presented in the Blame Argument is unchallenged.

the temporalist, since presumably the thickness of the real present would not expand and contract to accommodate each individual's specious present.

While we have noted the sequential character of temporal experience, we still have not seen why the experience of each moment has such a distinctive quality. Temporalists claim that what I have called the now-experience is a sense of "nowness" corresponding to the real presentness of the present moment. That is, in addition to all the various tactile, visual, auditory, cognitive and other kinds of experiences described in my example above, there is also before my mind, at least if I pay attention, a sense that all of these experiences are occurring *now*. As Craig says, we sometimes "reflect on our experiences…and observe them to be present,"[24] and he argues at length against the idea that ordinary attributions of real presentness might not correspond to realty.[25] Unfortunately, the one claim that Craig does not argue for is the claim that we attribute A-properties to various events. He explicitly takes this for granted, writing that

> virtually all philosophers of space and time, including B-theorists of time, admit that the view of the common man is that time involves a past, present, and future which are objectively real and that things or events really do come to be and pass away in time.[26]

But this is too hasty. Given (RF), I obviously cannot dispute the conditional: if everyone experiences time as tensed, then time should be understood as tensed. However, the antecedent seems eminently questionable.

Craig would have us believe that experience is sometimes or always accompanied by a sense or feeling that the "past, present, and future…are objectively

[24] Craig (2003a: 144).
[25] Ibid., 139-148.
[26] Craig (2003a: 132).

real," by which he apparently means that their status *as* past, present and future are objective. (After all, no philosopher of time denies that these times are real – though Craig, as a presentist, must deny that past and future are concrete.) Consider the fact that, pre-theoretically, we notice at a time *t* that *t* is presented to us in an importantly different ways from times prior and subsequent to *t*. This much, I take it, is indisputable, as the example that I sketched of my own present experience makes clear. But where is the "now" part? I notice the sensations and the other types of experiences, but I, for one, do not notice anything that I might describe as nowness. D.H. Mellor points out that it is perfectly possible to engage in a second-order reflection on my experiences at a time, so that I gather an awareness of the experience.[27] But again, as distinctive as this second-order awareness is, it is hardly the same thing as an awareness of anything answering to the notion of objective presentness. In the next chapter we will consider a powerful argument put forward by A.N. Prior in defense of the claim that ordinary people make judgments of objective presentness all the time. But Prior says nothing about experience. It is Craig who connects Prior's argument to experience, by situating it in a larger argument from the "experience of tense." And while he ably defends Prior's argument, he never substantiates his claim that we *observe* certain events to be present.

I want to suggest that a better account of the special quality of our present experience is simply the observation that it immediate. If the present seems especially vivid, it is because experience is vivid, experience is always had at a time, and the time

[27] Mellor (1998: 40ff).

of our experience is what we call the present – not because we notice some property of presentness. Let us, then, simply identify the now-experience with either my total experience at a time or with the second-order experience of reflecting on my experience at a time. The difference matters little; what matters is that A-properties never enter into the picture. This is not to say that A-properties *could* not enter the picture – I certainly do not wish to argue that experience is essentially B-theoretical – but only that A-properties cannot be read off the now-experience.

The now-experience can help us understand the second conspicuous feature of temporal experience, the flow-experience. As with the temporalist interpretation of the now-experience, Craig takes the temporalist interpretation of the flow-experience as a datum, and then argues at length that the datum makes a mockery of eternalism. Consider the following passage:

> Are we to understand that there actually exists a temporal becoming in the mental realm which is absent from the physical realm? Do mental events, unlike physical events, come to be and pass away? Does the mind-dependence of becoming mean that due to consciousness there exists what would otherwise not exist, temporal becoming, but of a peculiarly mental sort? Or are we rather to understand that temporal becoming is an illusion of consciousness, a chimera as unreal in the mental realm as in the physical? Is our experience of temporal becoming wholly non-veridical, even our experience of the passage of psychological time? Do mental events exist as tenselessly as physical events, so that becoming is absent from both aspects of reality?[28]

What lies behind all of these questions, and what structures the ensuing discussion, is a false dichotomy: either the eternalist must assert that dynamic succession somehow actually occurs in the mind but not in external reality, or he must assert that we toil

[28] Craig (2003b: 167).

under a massive illusion, since dynamic succession would *appear* to occur in the mind but answer to nothing in reality. If I were to try to defend the "absurd dualism" of the first alternative,[29] this would saddle eternalism with a mass of conceptual baggage not shared by temporalism, but if I were to claim on the other hand that temporal experience was "purely subjective,"[30] I would run afoul of (RF). Fortunately, I can affirm a third option simply by denying that experience delivers to us the notion of dynamic succession at all. As with the now-experience, the flow-experience it undeniably real – we almost cannot help describing time in terms of passage or movement. However, as I argued at length in Section 4.1, no one, not even the temporalist, uses these expressions in their normal sense. If the ordinary person thinks that time moves in the way that a parade, a boat, or an airplane moves, then his view is incoherent – as is any theory that tries to preserve the literal truth of his view. Fortunately for the ordinary person, everyone uses the language of movement in an extended sense when talking about time. I maintain, *pace* Craig, that the phenomenology of what we naturally describe in terms of movement can be fully accounted for in eternalist terms.

One way of looking at the matter is to take our cue from Mellor. He argues that at any given moment we have a variety of irreducibly tensed beliefs. If we are to keep our beliefs generally true, then at each new moment we naturally must form new A-beliefs as changing circumstances render the old ones false. If I believe at t_1 that it *is now* snowing, then I may be right at t_1, but I will be wrong if I still believe this at t_2, a

[29] Ibid., 168.
[30] Ibid., 167.

day after it has stopped snowing. Thus I will come to believe at t_2 that it *was* snowing *yesterday*. Such constant changes in our A-beliefs, says Mellor, "correspond exactly to the changes that A-theorists take to constitute the flow of time."[31] As we will see in the next chapter, Mellor's view essentially involves the misrepresentation of times, something which no one who accepts (RF) can countenance. But where he has beliefs, we can substitute experiences. Since my environment is always changing, my experience of that environment is always changing as well, at least if my perceptual and other cognitive faculties are in working order. If at each moment a new now-experience replaces the now-experience of the previous moment, then a feeling of change at every moment is exactly what we should expect – and exactly what we get. Once we admit that there is no nowness in the now-experience, we are free to describe these changes in B-theoretical terms: If at t_1 I represent my surroundings in one way, then this representation might be accurate at t_1, but it will be inaccurate if I still represent them this way at t_2, a day after it has stopped snowing.

This point can further be illustrated by considering Craig's description of "temporal becoming." First he describes our putative experience of the external world:

> What could be more obvious than the fact that we see things coming to exist and ceasing to exist, that we experience events happening?[32]

I cannot comment on the first part of this claim, as I have never seen anything come to exist or cease to exist. However, I can say that nothing in the story I have told is in tension with the second part, that we experience events happening. In fact, one way to

[31] Mellor (1998: 68-69).
[32] Craig (2003a: 159).

account for the phenomenology of an event that takes place over time is with reference to the various parts of the event being presented to us by means of successive now-experiences. A play, for instance, does not come to us all at once, but in parcels of successive and perhaps overlapping now-experiences. Given that our constitution requires that experience comes in small parcels, it is hard to see how a play could be experienced in any other way than we actually do, even on the supposition of eternalism. What is not clear is why A-determinations are necessary to the picture at all. A similar point applies to Craig's description of our internal life:

> Some of our thoughts are now past, we are aware of our present mental experience, and we anticipate that we shall think new thoughts in the future. And there is no arresting of this flux of experience; there is constant and ineluctable becoming.[33]

Craig makes it sound as if the only meaningful vocabulary for describing our temporal experience is A-theoretical. But compare the following:

> At *t*, we judge that some of our thoughts (timelessly) are before *t*, we are aware at *t* of our mental experience at *t*, and we anticipate at *t* that thoughts that (timelessly) are new with respect to *t* (timelessly) occur after *t*. And there (timelessly) is no arresting of this flux of experience; there (timelessly) is constant and ineluctable, albeit static, succession in our now-experiences.

This is more cumbersome than the passage from Craig, but it leaves out nothing essential – every part of the experience Craig describes is accounted for. The sheer awkwardness of the paraphrase could, in fact, be one explanation for why we talk in tensed language at all: it is a shortcut, not an expression of metaphysics. If we grant at least the possibility of eternalism, the latter description is, I claim, no more or less

[33] Ibid., 159-160.

accurate to our experience than the former. Given the language Craig chooses to frame his description of experience, he appears to beg the question in favor of temporalism.

Finally, let us turn to the direction-experience, which we can consider a bit more briefly. This experience is just our sense of orientation towards the future. Of course, it may be inapt to treat this as an experience *per se*. Craig's section on the subject says very little of the phenomenology of the experience, focusing instead on the non-experiential "thank goodness" objection to eternalism, which I shall address in Chapter 5.[34] In any event, there is an asymmetry in how we regard past and future which must be accounted for. Temporalists claim that the direction-experience comes from my marking an objective distinction between past and future, but as usual, I claim that our experience does not by itself suggest anything so strong.

It is useful for us to be always cognizant of the causal asymmetry of time, so that our actions are oriented towards those things that they can affect. To say that time is causally asymmetrical is simply to say that events at a time cannot in the normal case affect events at an earlier time, but that they can affect later times. Therefore, if I am to act effectively at a time *t*, I must be guided at *t* by three items of knowledge: that I can learn from and be otherwise causally influenced by times prior to *t* but I cannot causally influence them (except perhaps by making certain past sentences true), that my action at *t* will have its immediate effect at *t* and *t* alone, and that my action at *t* has potential ramifications for times subsequent to *t*. The asymmetry of time, together with facts about our constitution that have already been noted, yield a simple explanation of

[34] Ibid., 148-159.

our experience of asymmetry: the present has a self-intimating character, reminding us that it is the time when our actions have their effect, the memory of past now-experiences and other knowledge about the past inform our actions, and the fact that we have no memory of future now-experiences reminds us that the future is in our ultimate sphere of influence, as it were. At every moment, there is an asymmetry in my experience that both represents and is caused by the asymmetry of the timeline, serving as a constant guide to my actions. The asymmetry in my experience of course comes alongside the flow-experience, so that I always have the impression not only of change, but of irreversible change in one direction. Taken together, the flow-experience and the direction-experience, each constituted by different features of the now-experience, thus make up the experience of passage.

To reiterate my account, at every moment I have a now-experience, which is just my palpable total experience at that time. Since at every new moment I acquire a new now-experience and lose the old one, and since the number of now-experiences that I remember having had grows at every moment, both the flow-experience and the direction-experience emerge from the now-experience. The flow-experience adds a sense of urgency that goads me to act, while the direction-experience reminds me how to orient my actions. These experiences jointly constitute that experience that we tend to describe as an experience of temporal passage or movement – that "jerky and whooshy quality" that makes it seem as if time is always slipping through our fingers. I should add that it is not terribly important whether our experience of passage hangs together in exactly the way I have sketched. I promised earlier to give an account of

what the three aspects of temporal experiences are experiences of, how they fit together with one another, and what role they play in our mental life. The account I have provided does all of these things, and it does so without appealing to either real A-properties or false ascriptions of A-properties. My account shows how an eternalist can close the gap between temporal experience and temporal reality, which is exactly what was required.

5. Rationality (II)

> The essence of nowness runs like the fire along the fuse of time, but the particular spark is different at each point.
>
> – George Santayana, *Realms of Being*[1]

Whereas Chapters 2 and 3 focused on (E1), according to which the whole timeline timelessly exists, Chapter 4 and the present chapter focus chiefly on

(E2) No time is objectively present.

As I have noted, (E2) is the one claim that all temporalists are at pains to deny. In their view, the present time is really and uniquely present, whether in virtue of its being the only time that exists, or of its instantiating a primitive property of presentness, or of its being on the leading edge of a growing timeline, or of its possession of some other mind-independent temporal quality. Put another way, temporalists are united in affirming

(T) The present is objectively present.

We have already seen one motivation for (T): the present just *seems* objectively present. As it turns out, this claim rests on an over-interpretation of the data of experience. However, a more powerful argument for (T) is the "thank goodness" objection, which aims to show that our time-sensitive motivations are inexplicable without judgments of real presentness.

[1] Incidentally, Williams (1951) imputes presentism to Santayana, citing this quote as evidence. However, Gale (1999) shows that Santayana is clearly an eternalist.

5.1 "Thank Goodness That's Over"

The "thank goodness" objection is without a doubt the most influential argument against eternalism. A.N. Prior first stated the argument,[2] and it has since been endorsed in various forms by many others.[3] The point of the argument, as we will see, is to show that temporal indexicals, and tensed language generally, express a commitment to tensed facts and that eternalism is therefore false. Before turning to the argument, however, let me say a few words about tense. Recall McTaggart's distinction between the A-series and the B-series, the former consisting of past, present and future times, the latter consisting of times figuring into relations of *earlier-than*, *simultaneous-with*, and *subsequent-to*. As I noted in Chapter 1, philosophers of time since McTaggart have been preoccupied with two connected issues: whether the language of one series is analyzable in terms of the language of the other, and whether one series is ontologically reducible to the other. Much of the discussion on both scores revolves around the commitments of ordinary temporal discourse. Consider the following sentence, uttered today:

(1) The ballgame was yesterday.

This sentence employs a temporal indexical, which picks out its referent by specifying its relation to the time of utterance: "yesterday," in standard usage, denotes the day before today. An interesting feature of sentences using temporal indexicals is that their truth values vary depending on when they are tokened. For instance, if (1) were uttered

[2] Prior (1959) is the fullest statement of the objection, but it is also employed in Prior (1996) and elsewhere.
[3] E.g. Zimmerman (2006), Craig (2000), Ludlow (1999), Cockburn (1997), Lewis (1991), Sorabji (1984), Schlesinger (1980).

tomorrow, it would express a falsehood, at least on the assumption that it expresses a truth today. Now compare the following sentence:

(2) The ballgame occurs the day before Memorial Day, 2006.

This also expresses a relation between times, but it does so without using an indexical. The sentence is, as we might say, permanently true or permanently false; its truth value does not vary according to the time of utterance. The distinction between truth-variable sentences and truth-invariable sentences tracks McTaggart's distinction between the A-series and the B-series. As Lowe helpfully explains,

> [the] most important difference between the two classes of expressions is this: a sentence containing an A-series expression may by true at one time but false at another, whereas a sentence whose only temporal expressions are B-series expressions is true at all times if it is true at any time.[4]

Why is this distinction important? According to temporalists, the truth-variability of A-sentences is not merely a superficial and accidental feature of language, but instead tracks a certain variability in reality: the ballgame's occurrence yesterday did not obtain before, but it does obtain now, and it will cease to obtain again tomorrow – and that is all there is to it. The point is commonly expressed in the literature by saying that the A-theorist treats facts, and reality itself, as tensed. Eternalists of course cannot countenance such a proposal. For them, the ballgame's occurrence yesterday is a timeless state of affairs and thus is not the sort of thing that can go from obtaining at one time to not obtaining at the next. All facts and all of reality are tenseless, for the eternalist, even if language is tensed.

[4] Lowe (2002: 308).

The dispute between temporalists and eternalists hinges, as we know, on whether anything instantiates any property of unique presentness. Does temporally indexed language, and tensed language generally, track real and changing features of the world? Prior's argument is meant to settle the question in favor of temporalism by showing that tense cannot be eliminated from natural language without loss of important meaning. Prior invites the reader to consider the following sentence, uttered by a student at the conclusion of a grueling exam:

(3) Thank goodness that's over!

The word "over" in this sentence is a perfectly ordinary, if slightly non-standard, temporal indexical. How is this expression to be understood? Since temporal indexicals appear *prima facie* to express a commitment to tensed properties, proponents of the so-called "old" B-theory sought to eliminate them in their analyses of tensed discourse. They tried two strategies for translating sentences like (1). The date analysis theory, inspired mainly by W.V.O. Quine, interprets temporal indexicals such as "over" as expressing timeless relations between events and dates.[5] This approach gives us

(3D) Thank goodness that (is) before June 1, 2006!

where "(is)" is a tenseless copula and "June 1, 2006" abbreviates a definite description that specifies the time of utterance with reference to our conventional dating system. Despite its initial plausibility, (3D) fails to capture the meaning of (3), according to Prior, since it is obvious that the speaker may not have a date in mind at all. Indeed,

[5] Quine (1964).

> half the time I personally have forgotten what the date *is*, and have to look it up or ask somebody when I need it for writing cheques, etc.; yet even in this perpetual dateless haze one somehow communicates, one makes oneself understood, and with time references too.[6]

If knowing the date of utterance were necessary for communication, it would often be impossible for us to make ourselves understood in the way that we do. Moreover, even if the student does have June 1, 2006 in mind when he utters (3), he could believe days or weeks in advance that the exam timelessly occurs before that date, and yet would feel no gratitude until the exam lay in the past. Thus, it seems that the speaker's awareness of the date is neither necessary nor sufficient to account for the indexical element of (3).

The other approach is the token-reflexive theory, usually associated with Reichenbach,[7] which treats temporal indexicals as expressive of timeless relations between events and sentence tokens. On this theory, (3) is equivalent to

(3T) Thank goodness that (is) before the time of *u*!

where "*u*" is a name denoting the student's utterance of (3). But this analysis cannot be right, either, Prior says, since the speaker obviously has no regard for his own utterance:

> But when at the end of some ordeal I say, "Thank goodness that's over," do I mean "Thank goodness the latest part of that is earlier than this utterance"? I certainly do not; I'm not thinking about this utterance at all, it's the *overness*, the *now-endedness*, the *pastness* of the thing that I'm thankful for, and nothing else.[8]

[6] Prior (1959: 17).
[7] Reichenbach (1947).
[8] Prior (1996: 50).

The last thing on the student's mind is *u*, and even if he does have it in mind, he is surely not relieved at its timeless relation to the exam: "Why should anyone thank goodness for that?"[9] Like the date analysis theory, the token-reflexive theory provides neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of the student's relief. Prior concludes that (3) cannot be expressed in tenseless language; what motivates the speaker's relief, he claims, must be a judgment of a tensed fact, namely, the exam's objective overness.

It will come as no surprise that I think Prior's problem can be solved without invoking either tensed judgments or tensed facts. Before considering possible solutions, however, let me draw out a surprising additional consequence of the problem. What Prior seems not to have noticed is that the problem can easily be extended to other indexicals. For example, suppose that, famished, I see the fellow from the local Chinese restaurant arrive at my door with my order. In relief, I say

(4) Thank goodness the delivery man is here!

Inspired by Prior, we might ask exactly what state of affairs I am expressing gratitude for. A token-reflexive analysis of the spatial indexical "here" would yield the following:

(4X) Thank goodness the delivery man is at the place of this utterance!

But (4X) does not capture the meaning of (4). I could not care less where the delivery man is in relation to my utterance. What I care about is his *hereness*. The same could be said of the "place-analysis" treatment of (4):

(4XX) Thank goodness the delivery man is at 301 S. Franklin!

[9] Prior (1959: 17).

Why should anyone thank goodness for that? I do not have 301 S. Franklin in mind at all when I utter (4). I am giving voice to my relief that the delivery man is here, where I am, not that he is at a certain address. Clearly, the token-reflexive and place-analysis treatments leave out a vital part of the meaning of (4).

Should (4) prompt us to adopt here-ism, a theory that the present location is really, objectively *here*? Let us also not forget the personal indexical. Should the semantics of sentences using "I" prompt us to adopt me-ism, according to which one and only one person is objectively *me*?[10] A perverse metaphysician could, inspired by Prior, deny the reality of other locations and other persons, or, alternatively, claim that the present location and person each lack a singular quality that distinguishes them from every other location and person, respectively. While it would lead us astray to attempt a refutation of here-ism or me-ism, it seems safe to say that the "thank goodness" objection proves too much, as no temporalist would accept these consequences. Is there a disanalogy between the temporal case on one hand and the spatial and personal cases on the other? It seems not. There is no disanalogy at the level of language, as the behavior of temporal indexicals is virtually isomorphic to that of personal and especially spatial indexicals, with "now," "last week," and "the day after tomorrow" behaving like "here," "one mile south," and "the block after the next." Nor will it do any good to try to analyze spatial and personal indexicals in terms of

[10] Craig (2003a: 117-118) actually "bites the bullet" on this issue, suggesting that we posit "personally tensed facts…rooted in the existence of real selves." He goes on to note that there are independent motivations for "holding to the objective and fundamental reality of the self" (p. 122). Be this as it may, there are not independent motivations for holding to the objective and fundamental reality of *my*self while denying to other selves that same reality – and it is this latter idea, not the one Craig outlines, that is analogous to the temporalist's privileging of the present.

temporal indexicals, not only because it is hard to imagine how such a proposal would pan out, but also because, as we will see, there are good reasons to think that *all* indexicals present the same kinds of problems. In the absence of a reason to think that the semantics for temporal indexicals leads to interesting metaphysical conclusions while the semantics for other kinds of indexicals do not, we must conclude that the "thank goodness" objection is without force. There must be a problem with it somewhere.

As is well known, eternalists eventually acknowledged that tenseless language cannot capture the cognitive significance of sentences like (3), but the so-called "new" B-theorists have escaped the inference to tensed facts by maintaining that tenseless language can nevertheless express the truth conditions of tensed sentences.[11] However, Prior's problem is not merely about the translation of tensed sentences, but is also about the intentional objects (if any) of the attitudes that many such sentences express. For example, it may be that an utterance *u′* of

(5) The exam is over.

may be made true by the timeless state of affairs expressed by

(5D) The exam (is) before June 1, 2006.

or

(5T) The exam (is) before the time of *u′*.

but it hardly follows that either of these sentences records the object of relief expressed in (3). After all, (5D) and (5T) express states of affairs that obtain

[11] Smart (1981) introduces the crucial distinction exploited by new B-theorists. Oaklander (2003) suggests an alternative construal of the new B-theory, discussed below.

timelessly, and yet the student's gratitude comes only after the completion of the exam. Let us say that the *object problem* is the problem of specifying the intentional objects, if any, of time-sensitive attitudes such as relief, gratitude, nostalgia, dread, and anticipation. If the translation problem was the main semantic problem facing the old B-theory's proponents, the object problem is the main one facing proponents of the new B-theory.

James MacLaurin and Heather Dyke claim that the object problem has already been resolved, and turn their attention to the related but distinct question of why attitudes like relief are appropriate at some times and not others.[12] I do not dispute the importance of the latter question, nor do I wish to suggest that interesting solutions to the object problem have not been proposed. However, I do claim that the solutions on offer suffer from various defects that the eternalist would do well to avoid. If another solution can be found that lacks these defects, this can only be to the advantage of eternalism, as I shall show. In the remainder of this section, I shall raise some concerns about the various solutions on offer, and in the next section I shall outline my own solution.

There are three classes of solution to the object problem, which we can call the *no object solution*, the *tensed object solution*, and the *tenseless object solution*, respectively. The no object solution, once endorsed by Mellor (one of the leading lights of the new B-theory), construes relief and other time-sensitive attitudes as non-

[12] MacLaurin and Dyke (2002).

intentional states.[13] Mellor points out that a token of (3) can be broken into two expressions of different kinds:

(3a) That's over.

and

(3b) Thank goodness!

Mellor interprets (3a) in the way that has become standard for new B-theorists, i.e. as expressing an irreducibly tensed belief that is made true by a tenseless fact. However, he claims that (3b) should not be understood as being about any fact or any judgment of fact, but simply as a feeling that is caused by a fact, namely, the ending of the unpleasant experience mentioned in (3a). In his words, "[w]hat a token of 'Thank goodness' really does is express a feeling of relief (not necessarily relief from or about anything, just relief)."[14] This solution simply locates the time-sensitive element of the attitude expressed by (3) in the attitude itself, with no appeal to any tensed or tenseless intentional object. Unfortunately, as Murray MacBeath points out, the suggestion that attitudes never have intentional objects is hard to swallow.[15] Whatever might be said about (3), there are other examples that bring the aboutness of attitudes into sharp relief. Suppose we vary Prior's example slightly and imagine a student who thanked God in all sincerity for the recent completion of his exam. Here his gratitude seems quite clearly directed towards what he takes to be a state of affairs. Are we to believe that no one sincerely thanks God for things that happen? Even if Mellor succeeds in

[13] Mellor (1981a).
[14] Ibid., 297.
[15] MacBeath (1983: 87).

identifying the causal origin of relief and other attitudes, it does nothing to explain what such attitudes might be about.

However, MacBeath sketches an alternative strategy that has become popular among new theorists, Mellor included. According to MacBeath, the student's relief has an intentional object, namely, the object of the belief expressed by (5). This is the tensed object solution, which locates the time-sensitive element of various attitudes in intentional objects. MacLaurin and Dyke, who endorse this proposal, explain:

> The object of my relief is the same as the object of the irreducibly tensed belief that I hold: the belief that my pain is past. So, I believe that my pain is past, and the object of my relief is the content of this belief.[16]

Or as Mellor says in concession to MacBeath, "[b]eing glad has a propositional content, in this case the A-proposition that my pain is past."[17] This answer is certainly more elegant than Mellor's original one, as it simply makes use of other features of his general theory. However, it does not by itself illuminate the nature of the tensed objects of beliefs and attitudes. Can we say anything more about them other than that they are expressed with sentences using temporal indexicals? Without an answer to this question, the tensed object solution, although logically consistent, is hard to evaluate, since it is not clear what its larger implications are. New theorists have filled out the solution in three ways.

The first approach, developed by Mellor and endorsed more recently by Sider, claims that the objects of tensed beliefs and attitudes are functions from times to

[16] MacLaurin and Dyke (2002: 279).
[17] Mellor (1998: 41).

tenseless truth conditions.[18] Call this version of the tensed object solution the *function theory*. I shall start with the formulation given by Sider, since he explicitly states the theory with the "thank goodness" objection in view. Sider distinguishes *atemporal propositions*, which are ordinary timeless propositions, and *temporal propositions*, which are functions from times to atemporal propositions. On this proposal, (5) would represent a function, called "*over*," which assigns to a time *t* the atemporal proposition that the exam occurs before *t*. Sider asserts that "the object of [the speaker's] attitude at *t* is the temporal proposition *over*," and hastens to add that this "is *not* the same thing as being relieved, at *t*, that the atemporal proposition *over (t)* is true." After all, as we have seen, "the person may have known ahead of time that the [exam] would be over at *t*."[19] By making functions serve as propositional objects, Sider's view appears to provide a tidy way to handle sentences like (3) by specifying an object of relief that is neither reducible to a tenseless proposition nor committed to a tensed fact.

But something has gone awry. How could *over*, as opposed to *over* (*t*), be the object of the student's relief? Sider does not seem to notice that a function without an argument is not even a candidate for belief at a time. Here it is important to note that Mellor's original statement of the function theory, which Sider mentions, is motivated by the need to account for the constant meanings of tensed sentences while also explaining their varying truth values.[20] The theory does this by saying that what is expressed by a tensed sentence of a given type is always the same function, but that a

[18] Ibid., 59ff; Sider (2001: 20-21); cf. Kaplan (1989).
[19] Sider (2001: 20-21). Emphasis his.
[20] See Mellor (1981b: ch. 5, 1998: ch. 6).

different truth condition is yielded for each of the different times at which it is tokened, since a peculiarity of the function is that it always takes the time of its tokening as its argument. Because a tensed sentence type like *over* does not, by itself, specify any particular argument, it is not, *pace* Sider, a viable object of relief, any more than what

(6) (…) is the 43rd President of the U.S.A.

expresses is a viable object of relief: its missing element must be supplied before one can meaningfully affirm, deny, or form feelings about it. If someone utters (5) at a time *t*, his sentence token expresses the function *over* together with *t* as its argument. Since, as the function theory implies, the object of relief just is the meaning expressed by a tensed sentence token, the function-cum-argument *over* (*t*) would be the real object of relief.

Sider probably realizes this, since, despite his insistence that *over* is the object of the speaker's relief, he immediately goes on to suggest that the object is indeed *over* plus the time of the tokening of the sentence type that represents it. He does manage to explain the nature of the temporal function-cum-argument in a way that sidesteps the old translatability problem. Unfortunately, he does this in a way that seems to defeat his very purpose in articulating the function theory. Sider writes:

> Think of the temporal argument *t* of the function *over* as corresponding to the indexical 'now' that we use to express *over*: 'Ted's pain is just now over.' A temporal proposition represents a 'perspective' within time; the temporal propositions *over* represents the perspective shared by the set of moments *t* at which Ted had a painful experience immediately before *t* – that is, the set of times, *t*, such that *over (t)* is

> true. To be relieved at a time that my pain is over is to be relieved that I am then in just such a perspective.[21]

This passage is less than clear, but perhaps the best way to understand it is to say that the argument *t* is represented to the believer as an irreducibly tensed mental representation corresponding to "now," and that this representation, taken together with the function *over*, is what gives the object of the person's relief.[22] On this view, what a token of a sentence like (5) expresses is really an atemporal proposition – since this is what a temporal function-cum-argument is – but it is distinguished from other atemporal propositions by being grasped in part via a representation that cannot be expressed in tenseless terms. The glaring problem with this proposal is that it does nothing to alleviate Priorean worries. The apparatus of temporal propositions, however necessary to cope with the behavior of temporal indexicals in natural language, plays no role in answering the object problem – in fact, the apparatus dissolves altogether, since plain old timeless propositions turn out to be the objects of relief, anyway. And within these propositions lurk the very things that give the "thank goodness" objection its force, namely, belief objects corresponding to "now" and other indexicals. Rather than commenting on the specific character of these objects, this proposal merely tells us where they are located. Though there is no contradiction in the view Sider seems to endorse, it is hard to see what advantage it could have over other views, discussed below, that say something positive about what tensed representations might be like.

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[21] Sider (2001: 21).

[22] I assume that some representation is what gives "the temporal argument *t* of the function *over*… corresponding to the indexical 'now'." If Sider holds that no representation is involved, then his view is the non-representational view that I criticize below.

Mellor's own statement of the function theory suggests another possible construal of belief objects in addition to representations of *over* or *over* (*t*). Mellor never explicitly says that functions are the objects of attitudes, but he does say that functions are the objects of beliefs and that attitudes have the same objects as beliefs. Let us turn, then, to what he says about believing "tc-functions," which are his version of temporal propositions:

> [T]o believe a tc-function must be to believe that whatever truth condition is its value for the relevant arguments (place, time, person) obtains. But how do believers know which the relevant arguments are, and hence which the relevant truth conditions are? The answer is that they may not, and need not, know this, since a tc-function's arguments for any person at any place and time can be that very person, place and time whether he or she knows it or not.[23]

The idea here is that tc-functions have tokens, that these tokens take arguments, and that someone who believes a function token may be ignorant of its argument. Hence, instead of believing what we have expressed as "*over*" or "*over* (*t*)," the student who utters (3) believes what we can express as "*over* (…)," where "…" is filled in by an argument of which the student is unaware. The idea that tc-functions have tokens is unproblematic, since the same is clearly true of sentence types, but how could someone believe such a token without also knowing its argument? Mellor has very little to say on the subject, though he does, in a parenthetical remark, mention his article defending a causal, non-representational view of first-person, present tense

[23] Mellor (1998: 60).

belief.[24] Unfortunately, such a view cannot help with attitudes like relief, as the following example illustrates.

Suppose that as I sit atop Mount McKinley, the clouds part and God appears, announcing that he has an important message for me. Just to close loopholes, suppose also that I sincerely believe that it is God speaking. God hands down a scroll with a sentence printed on it. As the clouds close again, I frantically unroll the parchment, only to discover the following perplexing sentence token:

> (7) Consider a function *f* from geographic positions in North America to geographic positions in the northern hemisphere: for any position, *f* gives the position three feet north of it as its value; *a* is the name of a geographic position in North America; you will have eternal bliss if and only if you stand at *f* (*a*) in five minutes.

Should I feel relieved at (7)? If *a* is my own location atop the Alaskan peak, then tremendous relief is called for, at least if I have a compass, as I would need only walk three feet north and wait five minutes for my assurance of reward. However, if *a* is, say, a corner table at Pizzeria Uno in Chicago, then panic would be appropriate, as (7) would amount to a thinly veiled announcement of divine judgment. But when I read (7), I do not know how to react. Mellor emphasizes that meaning is intimately connected to use: since the student can say what the truth conditions of *over* are for any argument *t*, he can be said to understand *over* perfectly.[25] Likewise, I perfectly understand the sentence type that (7) corresponds to, since I can say what the value is

[24] Mellor (1989).
[25] Mellor (1998: 60-62). Cf. Falk's (2004: 266ff) "kinetic" theory of indexical reference.

for any argument it takes. Nevertheless, because I do not know what the argument is for the token printed on the parchment, I cannot form an appropriate attitude.

Mellor might point out that, unlike the token in my example, tokens of tc-functions have a self-referential element, taking as their arguments the times at which they are tokened.[26] Thus, for any time *x* at which someone believes at *x* the tc-function token *over* (…), the argument will automatically be *x* and the value outputted will be the atemporal truth condition specified by *over* (*x*). Be this as it may, this claim still does not help with intentional attitudes. For consider the following gloss on (3):

(3F) Thank goodness that (is) before (…)!

which, on Mellor's proposal, would express an attitude directed towards the object expressed by

(5F) The exam (is) before (…).

As Prior would ask, why should anyone thank goodness for that? Even though "(…)" happens to denote an argument position in a tc-function that is occupied by a time, it is hard to see why the student should feel relieved that the exam occurs at the time occupying that position unless he also knows which time that is. Perhaps Mellor could tell a causal story about attitudes, paralleling his causal story about beliefs, to account for their genesis and pragmatic role in the life of the believer. But how would this help? I want to suggest that attitudes are based on beliefs, and that believers tend to think that their beliefs have reasons. If we were to ask the student who utters (3) why he believes the exam was over, he would not cite whatever facts caused him to believe

[26] Mellor (1989: 22).

this. Instead he would likely point out that the date of the exam is March 31, 2006 and that today is June 1, 2006. He might even conclude by saying

(8) The exam is over *now*, and that is what I thank goodness for.

In (8), his use of the word "now" surely corresponds to a mental representation of some sort, since, without such a representation, his argument could not be evaluated, any more than an argument of the following form could be evaluated: *if A, then B; if B, then C; therefore, if A, then (…)*. Mellor's causal theory might tell us why the student *would* feel relieved, but it cannot tell us why he *should*, or why he *thinks he should*, feel relieved. Thus it misses the force of Prior's question. Indeed, if I have interpreted Mellor correctly, his new solution to the "thank goodness" objection appears to collapse into the no object solution that he once endorsed, since it implies that the objects of attitudes are not the sorts of things for which one even thinks he has reasons.[27] The function token *over* (…) is no better candidate for relief than (7).

But waiving all this, suppose Mellor can tell a viable story about intentional attitudes that construes their objects as non-representational. Even so, this theory of subjective reference will be highly unattractive to anyone committed to a representational view. This consequence alone does not sink the new B-theory, of course, since Mellor's theory of belief might turn out to be right, but it does saddle the theory with controversial theoretical baggage. It is interesting to note that virtually every leading new B-theorist (e.g. Mellor, Oaklander, Dyke, Beer) regards the B-

[27] I should note that I have said nothing that rules out externalism, which claims that some of our beliefs are warranted even if not justified, or coherentism, which claims that our beliefs do not have ultimate epistemic foundations. I take it that virtually all parties agree that, when asked, a person typically cites reasons for his beliefs, even if these reasons are not jointly sufficient for justification,

theory not only as true, but as necessarily true, since, due to McTaggart-inspired and other considerations, they consider the notion of tensed facts to be incoherent. If they are right about this, then any amount of theoretical cost that does not actually involve contradictions is warranted. Mellor's defense of eternalism relies, at a bare minimum, on a controversial treatment of subjective belief, and it also seems to entail that beliefs expressed with indexicals are not the sorts of things that one can have reasons for. Even if the problems with his view can be resolved, the constraints on my own project would keep me from embracing them. I must look for a solution to the object problem that is less contentious.

The next two approaches to the tensed object solution can be examined a bit more briefly, as they are rather more straightforward than the function theory. The false belief theory, proposed by Oaklander (the other leading light of the new B-theory), claims that the objects of tensed beliefs and attitudes are propositions that misrepresent the nature of temporal reality. Oaklander reaches much the same conclusion as I have about the function solution, though by a shorter route. He starts by distinguishing several types of meaning, including *intentional meanings*, which are the thoughts that speakers have in mind, and *linguistic meanings*, which are the linguistic rules governing the usage of sentences.[28] He goes on to pose several questions for Mellor's account that capture some of the concerns I have raised with respect to Sider's:

[28] Oaklander (2003: 268-269).

> What does capture the differences in the intentional meaning of A- and B-beliefs? What makes an A-belief intrinsically or irreducibly tensed? In virtue of what does an A-belief mean or intend what seems to be an A-fact but is not a fact at all? Does the irreducibly tensed belief imply some irreducibly tensed constituent *in* the belief that accounts for what seems to be an A-fact?...[29]

On Oaklander's reading, Mellor does not even speak to these questions, as he fails to notice that the linguistic meanings of sentence tokens does not tell us much, if anything, about their corresponding intentional objects. As he says, "[w]hat more is needed is something on the side of the *subject* that is irreducibly tensed."[30]

Oaklander does not appeal to anything as exotic as function tokens with unknown arguments to fill this lacuna. Instead, he suggests that the intentional meanings of tensed beliefs are irreducibly tensed contents which, since nothing in the world is tensed, misrepresent reality. Whereas other advocates of the new B-theory claim that tensed beliefs have tenseless truthmakers, Oaklander simply "bites the bullet" and denies that they have truthmakers at all, for the simple reason that these beliefs are "literally and metaphysically false." On this view, tensed beliefs are "pragmatically useful in enabling us to get along in the world…even though they do not correspond to any tensed facts."[31] Presumably, some evolutionary story could be told, perhaps along the lines suggested by MacLaurin and Dyke[32], to explain how the forming of false tensed beliefs is useful to us. The important thing for present purposes

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[29] Ibid., 283.
[30] Ibid. Emphasis his.
[31] Ibid., 284. If the new B-theory is defined as the view that tensed beliefs have tenseless truthmakers, Oaklander is not a new theorist. However, we can adopt a relaxed definition that defines the theory as the view that beliefs are irreducibly tensed but reality is not. On this construal, Oaklander is a new theorist.
[32] MacLaurin and Dyke (2002).

is that Oaklander's proposal provides an unproblematic answer to the "thank goodness" objection. Oaklander actually seems to agree with Prior that the student who utters (3) believes that the exam is objectively over; he simply denies Prior's assumption that reality must correspond to his belief.

Oaklander's proposal is refreshing because it does not invoke any obscurities: it is no more mysterious to believe that the world includes tensed facts than it is to believe that it includes square circles. However, it should be obvious that it is a straightforward violation of (RF), since it entails that almost all of our beliefs are at least partly false. (I say "at least partly false" because, for instance, the student's belief at *t* that the exam is over seems to entails the truth that the exam occurs before *t*, even if it also entails the falsehood that *t* is now.) Of course, his view is not *ipso facto* to be rejected, but it is unavailable to someone working under my constraints.

The third approach to tensed belief objects may or may not be less radical. The *limited access theory*, endorsed most recently by Michelle Beer, invokes cognitive senses that can only be grasped at the times that are their references.[33] Like Oaklander, Beer conceives of the objects of tensed beliefs as ordinary propositions, but rather than claiming that these ascribe irreducible tensed properties, she claims that they express individual essences. Invoking Gottlob Frege's distinction between sense and reference[34], Beer notes that two sentence tokens that differ in sense can nevertheless be about the same event. Take our (5D) and (5T), for example. Obviously, their senses differ, since, owing to the difference between "June 1, 2006" and "the time of *u'*,"

[33] Beer (2005); Cf. Beer (2006). Wierenga (1989) also endorses this solution.
[34] Frege (1997a).

someone could easily, perhaps due to a "dateless haze," believe one of the sentences without believing the other, even though they seem to pick out the same state of affairs.[35] In the same way, Beer says, there is no reason we cannot say that "for any A-sentence-token there is a B-sentence that differs in sense but reports the same event or state of affairs."[36] Thus her theory differs crucially from that of Oaklander, which she criticizes, in that it does not involve tensed senses ascribing properties over and above those that tenseless senses express. Of course, as she notes, the senses employed in tensed sentence tokens cannot do the work required of them unless they are cognitively accessible only at the moments they pick out. (Otherwise, the student in our example could know the proposition in question weeks ahead of his exam.) Thus she concludes that "what is expressed by the indexical 'now' is a unique individual essence or haecceity of a moment of time."[37]

Objections to this sort of view, as proposed by Beer and others, have been raised in many quarters.[38] Here I wish to add another objection to the mix. What is it about a time *t* that makes it such that it can be grasped in a certain way at *t* by, say, me, my mailman, a yak herder in Outer Mongolia, and someone on a planet orbiting a far-flung star, but cannot be grasped in that way by any mailmen or yak herders else prior to or subsequent to *t*? It would seem that all of us would have to grasp a certain

[35] Compare Beer's example: "Although they differ in sense, the sentences, 'The junior Senator from New York is (tenselessly) speaking at *t*' and 'The wife of President Clinton is (tenselessly) speaking at *t*,' report the same event, since their participial nominalizations are co-referring in that they refer to the same relata and have the same predicate" (Beer 2005: 6).
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 8.
[38] E.g. Smith (2006); Mozersky (2005); Kvanvig (1989); Perry (1977, 1979).

concept at *t*, and yet it is hard to see what we have in common that would make us grasp the *same* concept. It is not as if we share much by way of common experience; indeed, just about the only experiences that my mailman and a Mongolian yak herder are guaranteed to share at any arbitrary time are those of very broad types, such as the experience of existing or the experience of having perceptions. But concepts answering to phrases like "existing" and "having perceptions" obviously cannot do the work required, as they are graspable at any time. Is there, perhaps, some distinctive experience of "*t*-ness" that we all share at *t*, such that we all grasp a concept expressing this experience only at *t*? This proposal seems dubious, not because of its limited accessibility but because of its sheer implausibility. I, for one, do not notice any such quality when I introspect, and I have never heard anyone else mention the experiencing of such a quality. It is one thing to say that my experience at present has a *sui generis* quality that can only be described as an experience of "presentness," a suggestion that is doubtful, anyway, as many B-theorists have argued.[39] It is quite another to say that, at every moment, my experience has a *sui generis* quality that is *different* from the *sui generis* qualities experienced at other moments: a different "presentness" for every moment of my conscious existence. For Beer's proposal to work, then, there must be some special concept denoting *t* that has no experiential correlate at all – perhaps a non-qualitative property, on the order of a haecceity as conceived by the scholastics, that is directly intuited, or perhaps that supervenes on my experience at *t* via some causal mechanism. Far be it from me to suggest that such a

[39] E.g. Oaklander (1993).

concept and its corresponding mechanism of formation cannot exist. But their existence would be mysterious – if not intolerably so, then at least needlessly so, as this would require the postulation of some mental capability that we know nothing about. This is a costly solution.

It might be objected that one need not introduce a single concept that is somehow grasped by everyone conscious at *t*. Taking our cue from Alvin Plantinga, who has argued that a thing can have multiple essences,[40] we might say that each person grasps a different concept for an individual essence of *t* at *t*. But this answer only shifts the mystery. To be sure, there would not have to be a mechanism of formation that somehow ensured that my mailman and a yak herder formed the very same special concept at *t*, but there would still have to mechanism that ensured that each of them formed *some* special concept at *t*. However construed, the proposal of individual essences of limited accessibility entails some rather cumbersome theoretical baggage. Inasmuch as we have good grounds for supposing that human beings are not systematically deceived about the nature of reality, perhaps we have good grounds for preferring Beer's solution to Oaklander's. But it is not unreasonable to hold out hope for a less cumbersome solution.

In addition to the no object solution and the three varieties of the tensed object solution, there is, finally, the tensed belief state solution. Inspired mainly by John Perry's analysis of indexicals, this solution locates tense in belief states rather than in

[40] Plantinga (1974: 72ff).

the objects of belief.[41] Perry is concerned with indexicals generally, but I shall, for obvious reasons, concentrate on his treatment of temporal indexicals. In a celebrated article, Perry argues that the difficulty in interpreting sentences like (5) stems from the assumption "that belief states should be classified by propositions believed."[42] But with the exception of limited access theories, which he thinks involve a needless multiplication of facts, Perry argues at length that no attempt to replace the indexicals in sentences like (5) with concepts or other semantic ingredients can account for the action-guiding character of their corresponding beliefs, since any replacement will yield sentences whose meanings are knowable from any perspective.[43] Therefore, to account for indexicality, we must look, not to the objects of indexical belief, but to the *way* the objects are believed. Perry writes,

> As time passes, I go from the states corresponding to "The meeting will begin" to the one corresponding to "The meeting is beginning" and finally to "The meeting has begun." All along I believe of noon that it is when the meeting begins. But I believe it in different ways. And to these different ways of believing the same thing, different actions are appropriate: preparation: action, apology.[44]

One way to think of this proposal is to imagine two lists, one containing every proposition, e.g. those corresponding to (5D) and (5T), and the other containing every kind of belief state, e.g. that corresponding to sentence type expressed by (5). On Perry's view, it is a mistake to think that an item from a single list can give the

[41] Perry (1979, 1997).
[42] Perry (1979: 18).
[43] Gale (1962) is the earliest application of the problem of indexicals to action.
[44] Perry (1979: 19).

proposition believed on a particular occasion while also explaining why the belief guides action. A full account of indexical belief must include items from both lists.

As attractive as Perry's solution seems, it is incomplete as it stands. Precisely what is involved in being in a belief state classified by a sentence type like (5)? Even in recent statements of his view, Perry does not comment on the specific nature of the belief states that he appeals to.[45] Nor does an elaboration of these states seem to be forthcoming from B-theorists, even though they sometimes cite Perry's solution as a promising avenue of inquiry.[46] Without knowing the specific commitments of the tensed belief state solution, it is impossible to say whether these would be worth taking onboard.

Furthermore, even though the Perryan view may help explain actions based on time-sensitive beliefs, it still has trouble with attitudes, which are not only based on beliefs, but are directed towards their objects. As we have already seen, when the student utters (3), he is most certainly not thanking goodness for any state of affairs corresponding to (5D) or (5T). Of course, Perry prefers to think of propositions in *de re* terms, so that the subject position is not occupied by a concept representing an object, but the object itself. As he says, "I believe of noon that it is when the meeting begins." Thus the object of the belief state individuated by (5) would be something like

(5R) The exam is before T.

[45] See e.g. Perry (2006).
[46] See e.g. Mozersky (2000: 270).

where "T" directly refers to June 1, 2006. But as Perry himself observes, anyone at any time could know that a sentence like (5R) is true; thus (5R) is not a suitable object of relief for Prior's student. Does the Perryan eternalist have any other options? Obviously, the student cannot be thanking goodness for

(9) I am in a belief state individuated by (5).

since the tensed verb "am" expresses the indexical element that the B-theorist wishes to eliminate. Nor can the student be thanking goodness for

(10) I am in a belief state individuated by (5) at T.

since he could have known (10) weeks in advance. Perhaps the Perryan could claim that the belief state individuated by (5) just *is* relief. It is not that the student is relieved *about* his belief state; rather his belief state *is* a state of relief. Unfortunately, this would amount to the claim that attitudes do not have propositional objects, which we have already seen to be untenable. When the student says "thank goodness" – or "thank God" – he is not merely prompted to make an exclamation by an undirected feeling of relief. He is clearly expressing gratitude about something. But if the object of belief is nothing but an ordinary proposition – *de dicto* or *de re* – then such gratitude would be unfounded, since it would be knowable at any time. The basic phenomenon that we are concerned with is left unexplained. Unless another reading of Perry's answer is given that can make time-sensitive attitudes like relief explicable, we can only conclude that the tensed belief state solution, whatever its merits for coping with cases of action, is inadequate to the task at hand.

We have considered several views in three categories. Some of these views – i.e. Mellor's original view, Sider's initial statement of his view, probably Mellor's later view – are completely unworkable. Others – i.e. Sider's settled view, the Perryan view – contribute nothing to the "thank goodness" objection. And still others – i.e. Oaklander's view, Beer's view, certainly Mellor's later view – solve the object problem only at significant theoretical cost, entailing more or less radical revisions to the ways we usually think about belief. As I have repeatedly stressed, this cost could turn out to be warranted. But unless the eternalist solution to the "object problem" can be found that is less costly than the temporalist's – and it could be hard to maintain that any of the solutions already considered are less costly – my project will be in danger.

5.2 The Experiential View

I turn now to my proposed solution to the object problem, which I shall develop in two versions. Let us start with something we already know about. As we saw in Chapter 4, I have at this moment, and at every moment of my conscious existence, a rich and varied set of experiences. I now have various visual, tactile, and auditory sensations, various memories, expectations, mental images, and so on. Again, let us collect up all of my present experiences under a single title: the *now-experience*. As noted in Chapter 4, the existence of the now-experience seems uncontroversial. It is quite possible, naturally, to debate the specific character, nature, and role of my experiences,

but any doubts about their mere existence can easily be dispelled through a simple act of introspection.[47]

What I want to suggest is that my now-experience at a time *t* can serve as a representation of *t*. After all, many of its components, some of them composed of other components, already represent various things to me. My view requires the small stipulation that my whole now-experience at a time *t* also represents something to me, namely, *t*. Of course, it is not as if I do not also represent times to myself in other ways; the present moment, for instance, is now represented to me as "1:43 p.m., July 25, 2006," "six days and two hours after the end of my first dentist appointment of 2006," "the time at which I write the second paragraph of section III of 'Temporal Belief and Temporal Experience'," and so on. Surely it is not hard to accept that among the various representations of the present moment is my total experience at the present moment. Now observe an interesting feature of this representation: unlike the other representations just mentioned, my present now-experience was inaccessible to me prior to the present moment, and it will be inaccessible again later. This is not to say that the representation cannot be mentioned at other times (I mention it in this parenthetical remark, for example, which will be readable tomorrow), but only that it will not be experienced again, for the simple reason that it exists at no other time. That is, I never have two now-experiences of the same type on two separate occasions. Repeated total experiences are possible, logically and perhaps metaphysically, but they

[47] Of course, there are those (e.g. Churchland 1981) who assert that the very notion of experience is a relic of an incoherent folk psychology. But even if they are right, I certainly have a total brain state at any given moment, which can do duty for my purposes.

are not, at least in the case of human beings, actual – or if do occur, their occurrence is exceedingly rare and abnormal. I shall return to the possibility of recurring now-experiences below.

It may be obvious where I am going with this: in my view, a now-experience that represents *t* is a constituent of the object of my beliefs and my attitudes about *t* at *t*, but not at any other time. This is what gives my beliefs and attitudes their tensed character. My view can thus be characterized as a cousin of the limited access theory, a kind of theory that has elicited many strong reactions. For example, Arthur Falk ridicules the idea, owing to Frege[48] and recently defended in the temporal case, as we have seen, by Beer, that an indexical belief might be "directed toward an incommunicable complete singular proposition not otherwise accessible." In a curmudgeonly passage, he writes that such a proposal

> is extravagant in that it is a patent *non sequitur* from the data…which can be explained by more parsimonious hypotheses. The gratuitousness of it should make us suspect that wishful thinking is here straining to find support. The phenomenon of the essential indexical adds new knowledge over and above any scientific knowledge, but not new ontology, and we'll not pause to say any more in refutation of the claim that it does, since wishful thinking is endlessly resourceful in prolonging fruitless arguments. If Death could be put off until he won a debate on the reality of death with the one dying, no one would ever die.[49]

While theoretical extravagance is certainly something to be avoided, it is surely not fruitless to ask whether a theory like Beer's really is extravagant. Beer's proposal that each time is associated with a unique cognitive sense does seem to involve a bit of

[48] Frege (1997a: 332-334, 1997b: 235).
[49] Falk (2004: 263).

"new ontology," in that it invokes a class of concepts that are not reducible to any of the ordinary concepts countenanced by most other theories. It also, as we have seen, requires that we say some surprising things about the mind and its relation to the world. The theory no doubt has its costs, but is it extravagant? Here it must be observed that Falk's treatment of tensed beliefs is virtually identical to Mellor's later solution to the object problem.[50] But as we have seen, this view not only provides no viable objects of attitudes like relief, but also involves a deeply revisionary conception of belief. Moreover, the objects of indexical belief on Mellor's later view – Falk calls these "incomplete propositions" – themselves seem to constitute a bit of new ontology, since they apparently form a hitherto unknown class of objects existing alongside ordinary complete propositions. Thus it is far from clear that Beer's view, despite the surprising implications discussed above, is any less well-motivated than Falk's or that it is any less parsimonious – and as I shall show, my view is more parsimonious and less problematic than Beer's. Falk's charges against limited access theories are misplaced.

It could be objected that incommunicable belief objects are not extravagant *per se*, but that the notion of limited access is itself deeply problematic. However, this objection is also unfounded. I can grant that concepts that are limited to certain perspectives are problematic, but the claim that experiences are limited in this way is, well, obvious. It is not that it is impossible for someone to have qualitatively identical experiences on two or more separate occasions, but only that it does not actually

[50] Falk (2004: 272, n. 6).

happen – or at least if there are repeated total experiences, their occurrence is highly anomalous. When I sit down to write tomorrow, I may have many experiences similar to those I am having at present – similar sensations of typing, a similar feeling of coolness seemingly emanating from the fan, and so on – but my total experience then will not be identical to my total experience at present. It is a fact – not a necessary fact, but a fact nonetheless – that all, or virtually all, now-experiences are limited to a single time. Does anyone doubt this? I can even grant that every constituent of my now-experience is expressible as a concept that can in principle be communicated to someone else, because it is not as if I can or ever will give a description of a full now-experience that would bring an identical total experience before the mind of someone else (or my mind at another time).[51] For starters, such a description would be far too long for my hearer to cognize all at once. Unlike Beer's view, my view does not involve any kind of limited access that we are not already stuck with. The concept of the now-experience is anything but extravagant.

How do I put the now-experience to work? Let us call my solution to the object problem the *experiential solution* or the *experiential view*. The main version of the solution, which we can call "version 1," is a variety of tensed object theory. Recall that, according to the function theory, a tensed belief corresponds to a function that takes the time of belief as its argument and gives a tenseless truth condition as its

[51] Dennett (1988) argues against Jackson's (1982) famous example of a color scientist who knows every proposition about the color red and yet still does not know what it is like to see red. I can grant Dennett's point and still observe that, even if the scientist could know in advance what it would be like to see red, she would still not be able, due to contingent limitations in her cognitive capacities, to simultaneously entertain every aspect of another person's total experience at a time.

value. But instead of claiming that the argument position of a token of such a function is filled by a time that is represented to the believer by means of an unspecified concept, as Sider seems to propose, or by a time of which the believer is ignorant, as Mellor proposes, version 1 of the experiential view fills the argument position with a time that is represented to a believer as a now-experience. Let us say that a *now-proposition* is a function token whose argument is a time represented as a now-experience. Another way of putting this is to say that a now-proposition is just like an ordinary proposition that refers to a time, except that the time is referred to by means of a now-experience. I claim the experiential view gives the B-theory everything it needs from an answer to the object problem.

Returning to Prior's example of the student who utters (3), we can say that the object of his relief, and of his belief, is a now-proposition whose argument is represented to him as his now-experience at June 1, 2006. Here a crucial distinction must be drawn. Version 1 of the experiential solution does *not* say that the object of the student's relief is

(5X) The exam (is) before *e*.

where "*e*" expresses a concept or name denoting his now-experience on June 1, 2006. After all, (5X) can be grasped by anyone at any time. Rather, let us designate "*E*" as a place-holder for the student's now-experience on June 1, 2006. "*E*" mentions, but does not express, the now-experience, because the now-experience is not the sort of thing that is expressed in words. Thus my proposal would gloss (5) as

(5E) The exam (is) before *E*.

This, and not (5X), is what corresponds to the student's belief and is what he is grateful for when he utters (3). In Sider's language, the student believes *over* (*t*), where *t* is represented by its corresponding now-experience. My proposal counts as a version of the new B-theory because I have not offered a tenseless translation of (3) or (5). Rather, I have offered a tenseless way to characterize, but not to express fully, the objects of tensed beliefs and attitudes.[52]

Several issues must be considered in evaluating my proposal. First, does it yield a viable solution to the object problem contained in the "thank goodness" objection? Recall that Prior dismisses the date theory and the token-reflexive theory because the intentional objects they specify are neither necessary nor sufficient to account for the indexical element in sentences like (3). The objects are not necessary because the student may not have a date or an utterance in mind at all, and they are not sufficient because, even if he does have a date or utterance in mind, he could have known in advance that the exam would occur earlier than the time associated with such a date or utterance and yet not feel relieve until after the exam. But the proposal I have just sketched does not fall into either of Prior's traps. Taking Prior's second concern first, I have already shown that the now-experience for which "*E*" is a placeholder is not accessible, or is at least not accessed, at any moment except the time at which *E* occurs. The student does not believe (5E) weeks in advance of the exam, because at

[52] The reader may notice that version 1 of the experiential view bears a strong resemblance to the view given in Russell (1915). However, Russell defines "now" as what is "simultaneous with what is present to me, i.e. with *this*, where 'this' is the proper name of an object of sensation of which I am aware" (p. 213). My view says that the sensation is the name of a time, but does not appeal to any name for the sensation in the analysis of indexical belief.

that time he is not experiencing *E*. Thus my proposal provides a condition that is (together with the student's other beliefs, dispositions, and choices, of course) sufficient to explain the distinctive character of the student's belief and attitude at the moment in question on June 1, 2006.

Prior's first concern, that the objects of belief suggested by tenseless theories do not provide the ingredient necessary to account for the indexical element in tensed sentences, also does not apply to the theory I have proposed, since it cannot be maintained that the student does not have *E* in mind when he speaks. After all, *E* just is whatever he has in mind at that time – and if he has nothing in mind at all, then he will certainly not have attitudes directed towards intentional objects. Of course, Prior could concede that the student has *E* in mind, broadly speaking, but insist that the student has no particular regard for it: Why should anyone thank goodness that an exam occurs before a certain experience? The answer is that the student thanks goodness, not that the exam occurs before an experience, but that it occurs before a time. As I have said, the now-experience at the time serves as a representation of the time. No one thanks goodness for relations between representations, but for the relations between the things they take the representations to represent. Our student thanks goodness that the exam occurs before the moment in question on June 1, 2006, which is represented to him by the now-experience that we have designated (but not expressed) with "*E*."

One could try to press Prior's question further, asking why anyone should thank goodness that an exam occurs at a time represented this way. Just as the student could not care less whether the exam occurs before a time associated with some date or

a time associated with some utterance token, why should he care that it occurs before a time associated with *E*? My answer is that the same could be asked of *any* proposed treatment of sentences like (3). Why should anyone thank goodness that, as A-theorists variously contend, an exam occurred before the only time that exists, or before the only time that exemplifies primitive presentness, or before the time that enjoys a maximal degree of existence, or before the time that is on the leading edge of a growing universe?[53] Why should anyone thank goodness for, in Prior's words, "the *overness*, the *now-endedness*, the *pastness* of the thing"?[54] The answer, presumably, is that the student knows, probably tacitly, that an event occurring before the time that answers to one of these descriptions is at some remove from himself when he makes the judgment. And this is the same answer I give with respect to the exam's occurrence before *E*. There is nothing inherently relief-inducing about the proposition that an unpleasant experience is at some temporal remove from a time represented in a certain way, but such a claim can induce relief when taken together with other beliefs, dispositions, and background knowledge, either learned or biologically endowed, that certain kinds of representations can only be apprehended at certain times. Inasmuch as *any* theory will have to tell a story along these lines, mine is no more mystifying than any other, including the temporalist's. I conclude that the object of belief that I have proposed fully accounts for the distinctive character of the student's belief and attitude at the moment in question.

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[53] These versions of the tensed theory are defended by Zimmerman (2006), Smith (1993), Smith (2002), and Broad (1933), respectively.
[54] Prior (1996: 50).

While Prior's question has been answered, others remain. My theory says what the student *believes* when he utters a token of (3) or (5), but what does he *communicate*? Obviously, the word "now" does not capture *E*, any more than any other linguistic expression does. My answer is that a token of (3) expresses

(3C) Thank goodness the exam (is) before the time of *e*!

and that a token of (2) expresses

(5C) The exam (is) before the time of *e*.

where *e*, as I have already said, denotes the student's now-experience on June 1, 2006. (Naturally, the student also believes what he utters, but this is not the belief that his attitude is directed towards.) Put in the language of functions, my theory says that tokens of (3) and (5) in public language have *over* (the time of *e*) as their object. Thus we can account for the constant meaning of different tokens of sentences like (5) by saying that (5) represents a function from times of experiences to timeless truth conditions, and we can account for what is distinctive about each tokening by individuating tokens by their arguments. This treatment also happens to comport with existing treatments of indexicals, most notably David Kaplan's (which is apparently the theory that gave rise to Mellor's function view in the first place). Indeed, my theory can be viewed as an improvement on Kaplan's view, since Kaplan has little to say about the object of beliefs corresponding to indexical sentence tokens. My theory can even be extended to other indexicals. I cannot develop a comprehensive theory of indexicals here, but one strategy for doing so might be to have a person's total experience at a time serve not just as a representation of the time of the experience, but

for the time, place, and person of the experience. Thus the indexical element of beliefs corresponding to "now"-sentences, "here"-sentences, and "I"-sentences would be an experience representing now-here-I, and the sentence tokens themselves would be equivalent to sentences using "the time of *e*," "the place of *e*," and "the person of *e*." Another strategy would be to drop the requirement that a now-experience function as a representation all by itself and instead treat is as a constituent of representations such as "the time of *E*," "the place of *E*," and "the person of *E*." As with the first strategy, the sentence tokens themselves would be equivalent to sentences using "the time of *e*," "the place of *e*," and "the person of *e*."

Another question is this: What are the truth conditions for sentences like (5)? This is an all-important issue for proponents of the new B-theory, who claim that tenseless sentences give the truth conditions of tensed sentences, even though they are not semantically equivalent to them. My theory gives a straightforward answer. The truth condition of the belief expressed by (5) is the now-proposition

(5E) The exam (is) before *E*.

which is logically, but not semantically, equivalent to a token of (5) at the time of *E*, since *E* is not identical to or a constituent of linguistic expressions like "now" or "over." Of course, such expressions do, on my view, express meanings with constituents such as *e*, so that a token of (5) at the time of *E* is both logically and semantically equivalent to

(5C) The exam (is) before the time of *e*.

My view has two interesting consequences. First, even though (3) expresses an attitude of relief towards an object of belief associated with a token of (5), i.e. (5E), this relief is not directed towards the meaning of (5C). Second, even though (5E) and (5C) are not semantically equivalent, in that one could believe one without believing the other, they nevertheless express the same truth condition, namely, the state of affairs in which the exam timelessly occurs before the student's now-experience at the moment in question on June 1, 2006.

My theory might be viewed as analogous to the date theory of temporal indexicals, in that the truth condition of a sentence and its corresponding belief is a timeless relation between an event and a certain time, except that the system for denoting times is not our conventional dating system, but a system that assigns times to now-experiences functioning as names. (It is tempting to view the theory as variety of token-reflexive theory, where the token is of an experience type rather than an utterance type, but this would be confused, as my theory's truth conditions use experience tokens without mentioning them.) Of course, Quentin Smith has vigorously criticized the date theory[55], which could be thought to create problems for my theory. How does my theory fare in light of the sorts of considerations he brings forth?

Briefly, Smith's basic objection to the date theory is that it cannot give the right truth conditions for tensed sentences. Consider the date-theoretical truth condition for the token *u″* of

(11) The exam is now

[55] Smith (1993: ch. 2).

spoken at noon on May 31, 2006:

(11*) "The exam is now" as spoken at noon on May 31, 2006 is true if and only if the exam is at noon on May 31, 2006.

According to Smith, (11*) is inadequate, because the left hand side of the biconditional is satisfied in possible worlds in which the right hand side is not, thus violating the basic requirement for truth conditions. For in the actual world W_1, *u″* "occurs at a time that possesses the date-property of being [*x* many years, months, and days] after Christ's birth," and yet there is another possible world W_2 in which *u″* occurs at the time of the exam but Christ is born on a different date. Obviously, *u″* is true in W_2, even though the exam does not occur *x* many years, months, and days after Christ's birth. As Smith tries to show, neither a relational nor substantival view of time will help the date theorist: either way, token *u″* of (11) can be true, even if not uttered on the date specified in the truth condition.[56]

Fortunately, Smith's criticism presents no challenge to my analogue of the date theory, which gives the following truth condition for token *u″*, uttered in W_1:

(11**) "The exam is now" as spoken at noon on May 31, 2006 is true if and only if the exam is at the time of *e*.

Is there a possible world in which the left hand side of the biconditional is satisfied but the right hand side is not? Our conventional dating system is not employed on the right hand side, and so no problem is presented by the possibility of Christ's being born on a different day. But suppose that, in W_2, *e* does not pick out the time of the exam, because *E* does not exist. Instead, owing to the presence of a headache absent in W_1,

[56] Smith (1993: 35). See Mozersky (2000, 2001) for critical discussion.

the student in W_2 has a now-experience *E′* instead of *E*. Would *u″* not be true in W_2, even though the exam is not at the time of *e*? If the relational view of time is true, there is an easy answer. Since the relational view treats times as sets or sums of simultaneous events, the time in question in W_1 is, on this view, partly constituted by *E*. Since *E* does not exist in W_2, neither does the time. The time may, on some theories, have a counterpart in W_2**,** but two trans-world counterparts, however intimately related, are not identical. Thus in W_2, the left hand side of the biconditional is not satisfied, either, since the time that we designate as "noon on May 31, 2006" does not exist.

What about the substantival view, according to which times are not constituted by the events happening at them? If this view is right, then the time in question would exist, even if *E* does not. Here it might be tempting to follow J.J. C. Smart, who once suggested that truth conditions could be world-indexed, that is, treated merely as material biconditionals. But as Smith rightly notes, this would yield such obviously inadequate truth conditions as

(11**') "The exam is now" as spoken at noon on May 31, 2006 is true if and only if the sun is ninety-three million miles from the earth at the time of *e*.

Both sides of the biconditional in (11**') are of course satisfied, but the right hand side bears almost no relation to the meaning of (11).[57] This cannot be right. However, there is a better solution. Instead of world-indexing the truth conditions, we should world-index the properties of the time of the exam. In world W_2, the time we designate as

[57] See Smith (1993: 36-37). Though I have simplified the point at issue between Smart and Smith, I do not think I have falsified it.

"noon on May 31, 2006" exists and does not include *E*. However, this time does have the property of including-*E*-in-W_1. The truth condition that my view gives could be clarified thus:

> (11**") "The exam is now" as spoken at noon on May 31, 2006 is true if and only if the exam is at the time that has the property of including-*E*-in-W_1.

This makes (11) come out as true in both W_1 and W_2, since the time we designate as "noon at May 31, 2006" has the property of including-*E*-in-W_1 in both W_1 and W_2. (11**") is not trivial in the way that (11**') is, since worlds W_1 and W_2 are different worlds, owing to the presence of a headache in the latter that is absent in the former.[58] I conclude that, whether the relational or substantival theory of time is true, the objection inspired by Smith's criticism of the date theory fails to point up any shortcomings with my theory.[59]

I have shown that version 1 of the experiential view can cope with the kinds of considerations raised by Prior and Smith, the two most powerful critics of the B-theory. However, there are worries that may arise from other quarters. Some will object that I have conceded too much by admitting that a now-experience can be repeated. What if, by some strange coincidence, the student in Prior's example were to have such a now-experience twice, or many times? Would this not cause him to misplace his relief? One way to answer this question is to treat repeated now-

[58] My solution is inspired by Plantinga's (1978) treatment of proper names. Smith actually considers this treatment in another connection (see Smith 1993: 113), but not in connection with his criticism of the date theory.

[59] Or, for that matter, for the conventional date theory, inasmuch as a time in W_2 that lacks the property of being *x* many years, months, and days after Christ's birth would still have the property of being-*x*-many-years-months-and-days-after-Christ's-birth-in- W_1.

experiences as analogous to synonyms. Just as one token of "Donald Davison" might refer to the philosopher and a later token might refer to the literary critic, so might one token of a now-experience type might represent one time on one occasion and a later token of the same type might represent another time on another occasion. Of course, the critic could reply that the two instances of "Donald Davidson" are not actually tokens of the same type, since they are associated with different meanings, but an analogous claim cannot be made for two instances of a now-experience, since they each would represent a different time in the same way. My answer is that this possibility is no more problematic than the possibility that an individual might mistakenly assign the same date to two different days. For instance, the student might believe of one day that it is May 31, 2006, but then later, due to a misreading of a calendar, believe the same thing of the following day. This would create inconveniences for the student – perhaps prompting a feeling of dread rather than relief – but it would not threaten the conventional dating system. We already know that qualitatively identical now-experiences are highly anomalous if they happen at all. The almost miraculous sort of case envisaged by the critic hardly suggests that my view would lead to the systematic falsification of ordinary belief or the systematic misplacement of ordinary attitudes. At this point the critic might raise the more drastic possibility that, while in our own world, repeated total experiences are exceedingly rare or non-existence, but in other possible worlds they are common. However, there is once again a straightforward answer: I have not suggested that (RF) should be regarded as a necessary truth, but only as a truth. Presumably, if people in other

possible worlds regularly had repeated now-experiences, their psychology would be adapted to cope with this. But even if not, this would perhaps introduce the widespread misplacement of their attitudes, but this would have little to do with the attitudes of people existing in this world. The fact that people in other worlds have psychologies that are ill-suited to the character of their general experience does nothing to challenge the supposition that *our* attitudes are not, as a rule, misplaced.

Another worry has to do with the analysis of belief. I have claimed that experiential states can be constituents of propositions, a claim that will be objectionable to anyone committed to the idea that propositions are purely conceptual. For these critics, if something cannot be expressed on a piece of paper, it is not a proposition. While I hasten to point out that my view is still a representational view, I must concede that my treatment of the objects of belief is non-standard. Thus I shall briefly lay out a second version of the experiential view that accommodates the worry just described.

Whereas version 1 of the experiential view is a variety of the tensed object solution to the object problem, version 2 is a variety of the tensed belief state solution. On this view, tensed beliefs are three-place relations between a believer, a timeless proposition, and a now-experience, where the now-experience is, at the time of the experience, associated with the time mentioned in the proposition. This view takes

some inspiration from David Kaplan's theory of vivid names, though it has different motivations and works a bit differently.[60] In a much-discussed passage, Kaplan writes:

> Consider typical cases in which we would be likely to say that Ralph knows *x* or is acquainted with *x*. Then look only at the conglomeration of images, names, and partial descriptions which Ralph employs to bring *x* before his mind. Such a conglomeration, when suitably arranged and regimented, is what I call a vivid name.[61]

Kaplan, as I understand him, proposes that, when Ralph has a *de re* belief about *x*, the object of his belief is a *de re* proposition of which *x* (rather than a representation of *x*) is a constituent, but Ralph represents *x* to himself in a way that draws on the various associations he has with *x*. Those who think that the objects of belief are purely conceptual will obviously not accept this proposal as it stands, since they cannot countenance propositions that include concrete objects as their constituents. However, perhaps I can appease them by saying the following: When the student believes (5), the object of his belief is the *de dicto* proposition (5C), which entered into version 1 of the experiential solution as the content of the public utterance of (5). On version 2, (5C) is accompanied in the student's mind with the now-experience *E*, which functions as a sort of vivid name for the time mentioned in (5C), i.e. the time of *e*. The student can call (5C) before his mind at any time, but, as we have seen, *E* is only before his mind at the time of *e*. We might express the student's belief state at the time of *e* as the ordered pair

(5B) The exam (is) before the time of *e*, *E*.

[60] Kaplan (1968-1969). Kaplan's concern is the issue of referential opacity.
[61] Ibid., 383.

As we might say, the student believes (5C) with *E*. Likewise, when he utters (5), he is relieved about (5C) with *E*.

This view is similar to version 1, except that the tense of the belief resides in the belief state rather than the belief. Since version 2 gives the same truth condition for tensed sentences as version 1, I need not return to the issue here, as I have already explained it and considered the major objection. But what about Priorean worries? Since (5C) is very similar to the date sentence (5D), has Prior not already established that it is not an appropriate object of relief? After all, the student can believe at any time that (5C) is true, and yet he will only feel relief after the completion of the exam. My answer is that while the student may be able to believe (5C) at any time, he can only believe it with *E* at the time of *e*, since *E* is a now-experience that is only had at that time. *E* flags the object of the student's belief as the kind of thing that, given his other beliefs, dispositions, and choices, is the sort of thing for which one might appropriately express gratitude. And if Prior were to ask why anyone should thank goodness for a timeless proposition when it is flagged with a certain experience, my answer would be the same as above: *Any* theory, including tensed theories of time, must answer this question, since no account of the meaning of sentences like (3) wears its relief-appropriateness on its sleeve.

A critic of the experiential solution may protest that I have replaced one revision of standard conceptions of belief with another. That is, in order to avoid including non-conceptual constituents in the objects of belief, I have rejected the standard view that belief is a two-place relation between a believer and an object of

belief. To this, I must plead guilty as charged. Though I have moved the now-experience outside of the proposition, I have added something in addition to the proposition to account for the peculiar character of tensed beliefs. However, granting that it is desirable to avoid revisions to traditional treatments of belief, I maintain that they cannot be avoided without heavy costs elsewhere. Perry helpfully outlines what he takes to be the core tenets of the standard "doctrine of propositions," which presumably would motivate the critic's objection to my view. According to this doctrine,

(i) Propositions are objects related to subjects by the relation of believing.

(ii) Propositions are individuated by their cognitive sense or some analogous notion.

and

(iii) Propositions have "absolute" truth values, i.e. truth values independent of any personal, spatial or temporal perspective.[62]

Perry later adds another claim that "seems to be built right into traditional philosophies of belief," namely,

(iv) Propositions are what individuate beliefs.[63]

If the examples highlighted by Prior, Perry and others makes anything clear, it is that the doctrine of propositions has trouble coping with indexicals. Version 2 of the experiential view preserves (i), (ii), and (iii) by following Perry's suggestion of jettisoning (iv). Version 1 is actually close to the traditional doctrine, at least if we allow experiential representations to play the role analogous to cognitive senses

[62] Perry (1979: 6).
[63] Ibid., 18.

specified in (ii). The only proposals that require no revision whatsoever to the doctrine of propositions are those of Oaklander and Beer, but, as we have seen, these are revisionary in other ways. Of course, the real challenge for the critic of my view is to show that it is less revisionary than temporalism. However, temporalism calls for a straightforward rejection of (iii), since it relativizes truth values to times. Surely my proposals are at least on an equal footing with temporalism with respect to the doctrine of propositions. I conclude that the indirect argument against eternalism, i.e. the object problem contained in Prior's "thank goodness" objection, is not, despite initial appearances, a genuine challenge to eternalism.

There may be a lingering worry that, despite the foregoing arguments, natural language still favors temporalism over eternalism. After all, while the eternalist might be able to handle temporal indexicals as well as the temporalist, it is still striking that verb tense tracks the distinction between past, present and future. Why is there no analogue to tense in the spatial or personal case? After all, a speaker might privilege his own time, place and person in his use of indexicals, but his verbs show no favoritism towards his own place and person. Inasmuch as natural language is a repository for folk intuitions, the temporalist might argue, eternalism is revisionary because it must explain away the apparent commitments reflected in tensed language.

My answer is that natural language does not have the distinctively temporalist character that many presume it to have. I say this because, contrary to what is often assumed, natural language frequently uses tenseless verbs. For example, we often employ the "vivid present" or "historic present" when trying to recount events in a

way that conveys a sense of immediacy. I might report an earlier by saying, "so I say to him…and then he says…and then I say…" Even though the three utterances mentioned occur at three different times, and all of them occur in the past relative to my telling of the story, I use a verb form usually reserved for events occurring in the present. Why do I do this? I am certainly not attributing presentness to the times in question. Indeed, the present moment does not enter into my speech at all, even though my surface grammar may seem to suggest otherwise. It seems clear that I am using tenseless verbs. Furthermore, tenseless verbs are pervasive in formal writing. For instance, newspaper headlines, many news reports, and especially scholarly works tend to use verbs that, grammatically speaking, appear to be in the present tense. It is quite common, even the norm, for a description of a long event to be given entirely in the historic present, apparently because the author does not want to highlight its relationship to the time of writing. (Indeed, I have maintained the present tense through almost all of the present essay, even using it of those, like Augustine, who are long dead.) We all understand such writing, even though it functions as tenseless. Of course, I do not claim that eternalism fits *better* than temporalism with the ontology reflected in natural language, but rather that both theories find support in the way we ordinarily talk in some instances, and both encounter difficulties in other instances. Neither theory can be said to have a clear advantage in this regard, and the dispute must be adjudicated on other grounds.

To summarize, I have shown that every extant version of the new B-theory of time treats the objects of time-sensitive attitudes in a way that is problematic in one

way or another. Mellor's no object solution is untenable because it is obvious that at least some of our attitudes have objects. Sider's statement of the function version of the tensed object solution gets us no further with respect to the object problem because it says nothing about the status of the crucial component of the tensed belief objects it appeals to. Mellor's statement of the same solution offers belief objects that are not the sorts of things for which reasons can be given, which is as untenable as his original solution, and may even collapse into it. At a minimum, his view entails a causal, non-representational account of belief, which is a heavy cost. Oaklander's false belief version of the tensed object solution entails the massive falsification of ordinary beliefs, and Beer's limited access theory implies the existence of exotic mental faculties. Again, these are heavy costs. Perry's statement of the tensed belief state solution says nothing to say about the objects of attitudes, and the most natural way to cash out the view seems to suggest Mellor's early view that time-sensitive attitudes have no objects. At best, Perry's statement of this solution is, like Sider's, utterly illuminating about the nature of tensed belief. The experiential view, I claim, is less costly than any of these solutions. Both versions give our beliefs propositional objects which are, considered in light of my analysis, plausible objects of attitudes. Though it introduces new theoretical apparatus – in the case of the first version, a new kind of proposition, and in the case of the second, a new kind of belief state – it constructs the apparatus out of materials that we already have. And while it is a kind of limited access theory, it does not say anything that should surprise us, as we already know that total experiences at times are such that they are not captured in words. Since the

experiential view solves all the problems we need it to solve, and without entailing anything as burdensome as the commitments of the other theories on offer, I conclude that the experiential solution is the best solution to the object problem open to the eternalist. Moreover, since the costs of the view are no greater than the costs of temporalism, the "thank goodness" objection turns out not to present an intractable problem for eternalism, even given my constraints. One may affirm both (RF) and eternalism without sacrificing any more of the doctrine of propositions than the temporalist does.

6. Conclusion

> What is time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this even in thought so as to articulate the answer in words?...What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know…My mind is on fire to solve this very intricate enigma.
>
> – Saint Augustine, *Confessions*

Each of the objections to the compatibility thesis considered in this essay can be represented as an inconsistent set of claims fitting into the following schema:

(i) Persons satisfy φ.

(ii) If persons satisfy φ, then time does not satisfy ψ.

(iii) ψ is essential to eternalism.

(iv) Eternalism is true.

The first objection fills in φ and ψ with (FF) and (E1), respectively. The second fills them in with (RR) and (E1), respectively. The third, which came in two parts, fills in φ and ψ with (RF) and (E2), respectively. In each case, I have made (iii) true by definition and I have granted (i) for the sake of argument. And in each case, I have shown that (ii) can be denied not only without contradiction, but without significant theoretical cost. In other words, eternalism is not only logically consistent with the robust theory of persons, but is fully compatible with it. It does not follow that (iv) is true, of course, but we do now know that eternalism is on at least equal footing with temporalism with respect to the robust theory of persons, which is a conclusion of no small significance.

Two final objections could be raised against my argument for the compatibility thesis. First, a critic could try to assert that the theoretical costs incurred in my defense of eternalism are heavier than I have suggested. After all, as I stressed in Chapter 1, no view is entirely without costs. Could eternalism be as uncostly as I claim? To answer this, I can only repeat the consequences of the arguments of the previous chapters, lay them alongside those of temporalism, and let the reader decide.

In Chapter 2, I argued for the full compatibility of eternalism and (FF), according to which human choice involves both alternative possibilities and ultimate responsibility. The main arguments against my view were based on the claim that the conjunction of (E1) and (FF) generates a contradiction. In responding to this claim, the only significant theoretical apparatus that I appealed to was that of possible worlds. However, as I pointed out, eternalism does not require any particular theory of possible worlds. Indeed, my counter-arguments could have been framed just as easily, if in a more cumbersome way, entirely in terms of possibility rather than possible worlds. The only theoretical commitment of any significance involved in my defense was what could be described as a form of backwards causation. Of course, it is far from clear that the relation between a truthmaker and a truth is causal – does my typing at this moment *cause* the proposition that I is typing at this moment to be true? – but even granting that genuine causation is involved, it is a very limited form that has no larger consequences. It is not as if I claimed that someone could, say, be his own grandfather.

However, the most important thing to note is that it is not easy for the temporalist to avoid equally weight consequences. First consider the two versions of the moving spotlight theory, which affirm the existence of a unique past and future but add that there is a real moving present. These views are every bit as committed to a limited backwards causation as my own view. Even though moving spotlight theorists claim that some propositions change their truth values over time – namely, those propositions asserting that a particular moment is present – they also claim that others are permanently true. For instance, if it will be true that Martians colonize the earth, then it is now the case that this will be true, since the event of the Martian colonization is already "out there," included in the temporal realist's most inclusive domain of quantification. Now consider anti-realism, the class of views that deny the existence of a concrete past, a concrete future, or both. Proponents of these views must say that, when someone apparently quantifies over past and future objects and events, either one is necessarily mistaken or he really quantifies over some ersatz object such as an abstract representation or a presently existing evidence or disposition. Great efforts have been made to demonstrate the coherence of conceiving of past and future reference in such a way, but whether or not these efforts succeed, it must be admitted that the conclusion is revisionary. No one who speaks of George Washington, for instance, takes himself to be referring either to a representation of George Washington or to certain documents and artifacts existing in museums and elsewhere. The only temporalist view left is the shrinking tree theory, which has the advantage of preserving a concrete past and future while also allowing the future to be open in a

very strong sense. The disadvantage is that it commits one the existence of multiple concrete futures, which seems both extravagant and counterintuitive. This is not to say that the various forms of temporalism do not constitute interesting approaches to the question of freedom, but if the issue is theoretical cost, there is little basis for claiming that eternalism is any worse off with respect to (FF) than temporalism.

What about trans-temporal responsibility? Here the eternalist is in a uniquely strong position, because both theories of persistence are fully compatible with his view. Even if my argument that (RR) creates problems for perdurantism turns out the be inadequate, this is at least as much a problem for the temporalist as it is for the eternalist – indeed, it may be that temporal anti-realism is incompatible with perdurantism, or at least that it cannot be made compatible with it without entailing the strange consequence that something can be composed of parts that do not all exist. Of course, the temporalist may grant the cogency of the Blame Argument and yet maintain that the conjunction of eternalism and endurantism is itself problematic. However, I have shown that no important intuitions are lost be combining these views. The claim that eternalism entails bi-location is based on an analysis of the concept of location that is both question-begging and unsupported by ordinary intuitions. And the claim that eternalism-endurantism denies that properties like straightness are intrinsic does not challenge my view, because the denial it involves is no more revisionary than the perdurantist's suggestion that objects do not really persist from one moment to the next, or the presentist's suggestion that objects do not really possess the apparently incompatible properties in question. The issue is not whether eternalism is free of

theoretical commitments, but whether these commitments have more radical consequences than the commitments involved in the alternatives. I have made clear that the eternalist – even the eternalist who embraces endurantism – is at least as well off with respect to theoretical cost than the temporalist.

Many think that the character of temporal experience forces the eternalist into a revisionary position, but I have shown that this is not the case. Indeed, the temporalist's suggestion that we experience something that it best described as "nowness" is implausible on its face. To be sure, one's experience at a time has an importantly different quality from the quality of his experience at that time of other times, but this is easily explained with reference to the immediacy of that experience. One could describe it as an experience of "presentness," but this is not a presentness that involves any commitment to a special temporal quality possessed by that moment alone. And once the special quality of one's experience at a time is identified, the other aspects of temporal experience can be explained in terms of that quality. Since one's now-experience at one moment is different in character from his now-experience at the next, we would naturally expect, even on an eternalist picture, that there should be some feeling describable as passage or movement. As I argued, movement can only be understood as a metaphor, even for the staunchest of temporalists. Once we have an adequate conception of motion in hand – my suggestion was the notion of extension in a direction – this can form the basis of an analysis of temporal movement that preserves both the eternalist conception of time and the quality of our experience. Finally, while it is less than certain that there is a specific feeling of orientation

towards the future, this is explained by the feeling of temporal movement, plus memory and anticipation. It turns out that, once the character of our actually experience is understood, a plausible story can be told that demonstrates the full compatibility of (E2) and (RF).

Finally, there is nothing about our time-sensitive motivations that creates a special problem for eternalism. Indeed, there are also place-sensitive and person-sensitive motivations that stand equally in need of explanation, and yet the temporalist does not conclude from these that the present location or person is ontologically privileged. However, even if the case of temporal indexicals presents a special problem, I have shown that the eternalist can handle them in a way that not only involves no contradiction, but that involves no more revision to standards treatments of belief than alternative views. The two versions of the experiential view do, to be sure, call for new way to look at belief, but these should not be objectionable, since the crucial insight of the view is that we are already stuck with experiences that have a certain character. The first version of the view is especially non-revisionary, since it conceives of belief objects in representational terms. If the temporalist objects that these belief objects have a component that does not belong in traditional accounts of belief, it can be pointed out that traditional accounts also see truth values as invariant from one perspective to the next, something which temporalism essentially denies. Once again, (E2) and (RF) are fully compatible.

There may still linger a general worry to the effect that temporalism just accords better with ordinary intuition than eternalism. This claim would not ordinarily

be decisive, but given my claim that eternalism has no theoretical disadvantages vis-à-vis temporalism, the testimony of everyday experience could count as an item on the negative side of the ledger that I have not accounted for. My response to this suggestion is that it is simply false. I have already dealt with many everyday intuitions that are supposed to favor temporalism. The ordinary person thinks that the future is open, that free actions originate with the agent, that things change their properties over time, that things persist, that a single thing cannot occupy distinct locations, that there is something special about the present moment, that time passes, and that some states of affairs are suitable objects of attitudes. In every case, I have shown nothing is lost in affirming eternalism, at least if eternalism is properly understood. If there is, in addition to these various intuitions, some general intuition that temporalism is true, all I can say is that I do not share it, and I see no evidence that anyone who has not been trained in philosophy shares it. If I may wax autobiographical, I can attest that, even as a young teenager, I had a hunch that the past and future existed and that presentness was a matter of perspective. I do not offer this as evidence for eternalism; I simply offer it as evidence that, in at least some cases, those who have given no thought to (FF), (RR), or (RF) are inclined to view things in an eternalist way. I have no doubt that others have the opposite inclination, but if no arguments for temporalism are forthcoming beyond those considered in the present essay, it is hard to see why anyone who does not share the opposite inclination should even be tempted to change his mind. Unless my arguments have failed, I submit that the best the temporalist can do is show that his view is as well supported as eternalism.

Now notice something. Apart from theological motivations, there do not seem to be any positive motivations for the theory apart from those considered here. That is, not only does temporalism enjoy no particular support from ordinary intuition, it also seems to lack philosophical support. This is surprising, because it is often taken for granted that temporalism is the default theory and that eternalism is the challenger. But I have shown that the best the temporalist can do (again without invoking theological motivations) is to claim that his theory is on an equal footing with eternalism with respect to freedom, responsibility, rationality, and the various minor issues I have discussed throughout the course of this essay. However, the same cannot be said of eternalism. I mentioned in Chapter 1 that some eternalists believe that temporalism is incoherent, owing to paradoxes arising from McTaggart's analysis of the A-series. Of course, if these eternalists are right, then much of the argument of the present essay is unnecessary: as long as no logical contradiction is entailed by eternalism, any amount of theoretical baggage is warranted if temporalism is incoherent. But even apart from arguments of this sort, there is also the special theory of relativity, which is frequently cited in support of eternalism. Many have claimed that relativity theory entails or strongly implies eternalism, but if the compatibility thesis is true, then such a strong claim is unnecessary. Rather, one need only claim that relativity theory provides a strong *prima facie* reason to prefer eternalism.

And this sort of argument is not hard to make. Relativity theory, on the standard interpretation accepted by many philosophers and virtually all scientists, implies that simultaneity is relative to one's inertial reference frame. That is, two

events might be simultaneous from the standpoint of one reference frame but non-simultaneous from another. The problem for the temporalist is that the notion of an objective present seems essentially to involve absolute simultaneity. After all, if an event is present from my perspective but future from yours, this would undercut the very point of temporalism, which is that there is a fact of the matter about which moment is present. This does not mean that the temporalist cannot cope with relativity, of course. On option is to claim that, of the many reference frames in existence, one of them is privileged – it is the one in which real presentness subsides. The problem with this claim, though, is that it would undercut many of the arguments for temporalism. For instance, why should it matter that one of my choices occurs in the real present but is future with respect to my own reference frame? The choice would be just as fixed as it would be if on eternalism. Or what if I thank goodness that some unpleasant event is over, but it turns out to be in the real present? My judgment would be automatically false, making it hard for the temporalist to maintain (RF). Another option for the temporalist is to claim that relativity calls for revision, for instance, by making it about the luminal observations rather than about the behavior or light itself. But why make such a revision to existing theory without independent motivation? The issue is not whether temporalism is logically consistent with either relativity theory itself or with the reasoning that gives rise to it, but whether it can be conjoined with relativity theory without significant theoretical cost, i.e. whether it is fully compatible with it. With sufficient motivation, temporalism may very well be motivated. But the whole aim of this essay has been to show that such motivation does not exist. And in this fact resides

the significance of the present essay. Not only is temporalism no more attractive than eternalism, but, if the argument from relativity is developed, it can likely be shown to be less attractive. As I said in Chapter 1, my extended defense of the compatibility thesis lays the groundwork for a solid positive defense of eternalism, and one, moreover, that does not rely on the claim that temporalism is incoherent. J.J.C. Smart once complained that many philosophers of time are under the spell of anthropocentric thinking and urged them to embrace eternalism in its place.[1] This essay has shown that his complaint is misguided. One can, without contradiction or even implausibility, affirm both eternalism and the robust theory of persons.

[1] See Smart (1963).

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